

## Bullies and Thugs

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# Bullies and Thugs

by [CerveauSousVide](#)

## Summary

Will is strange boy. Being the son of an oil magnate certainly doesn't help. Bullied at school and ignored by his father, he turns to a local bar to hire the biggest, meanest thug to protect him from his enemies

Coming down from a coke bender and nursing one hell of a hangover, Nigel wasn't interested in playing with needy little boys. Yet when he counted the money and caught sight of the fire in Will's eyes, he finds himself utterly captivated by the indomitable boy before him.

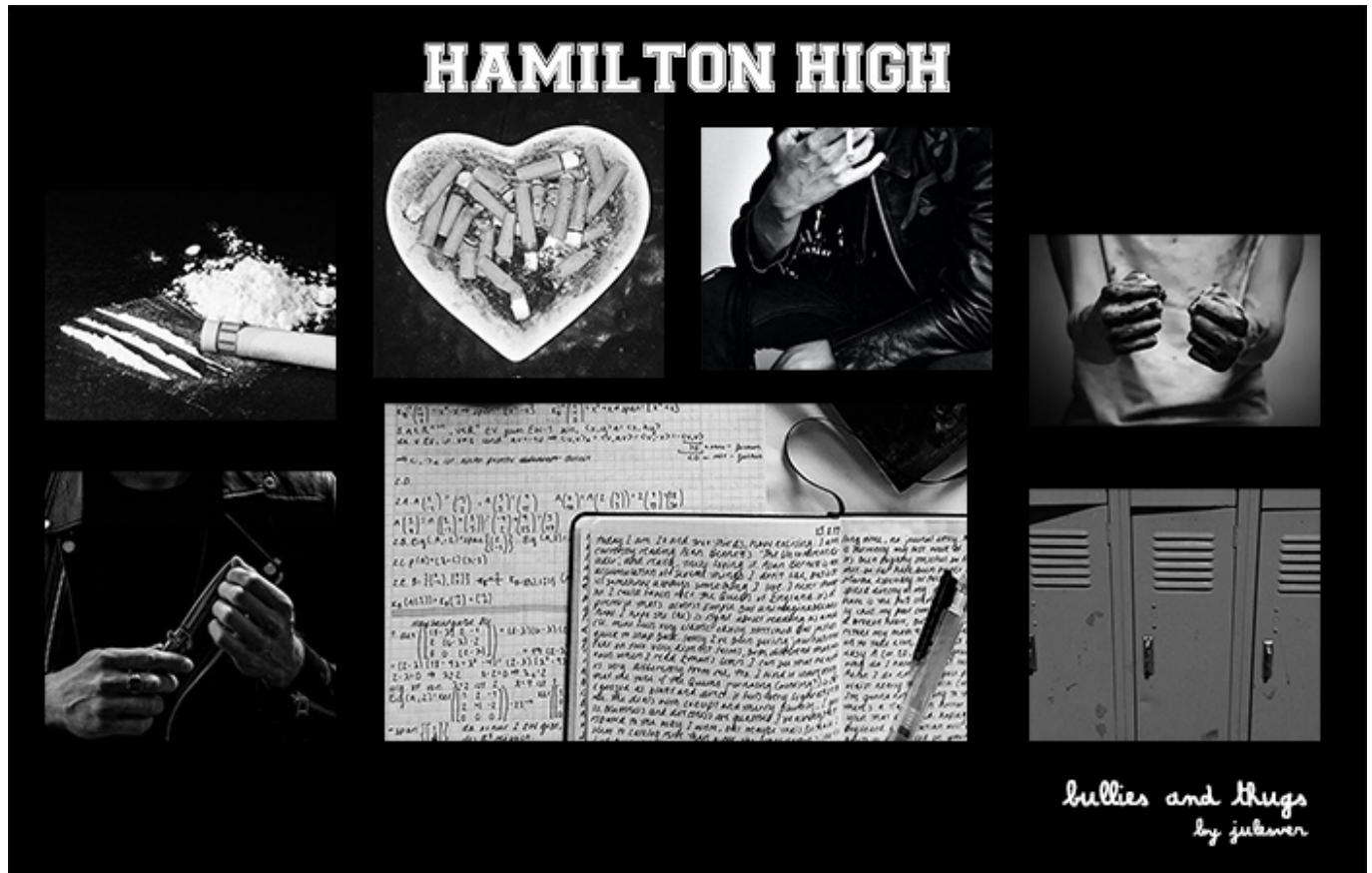
A coming of age story where a lonely boy meets a man desperate for redemption, both struggling to find meaning in a world that only wanted to destroy them.

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

## Chapter Notes

Thank you to the lovely baby\_cinema for the wonderful cover art!



bullies and thugs  
by jakeover

Whoever said that things would get better in high school was a goddamn liar.

At least back in primary school Will's little oddities were excused as the typical awkwardness of youth. People might've looked at him strangely, but they did nothing to bother him. Who cares about the quiet boy who stared too much when there's Elmer Emmy eating glue off popsicle sticks and Ryan Buchanan peeing his pants before PE?

Sure, other children were unnerved by his *otherness*, but Will was quite content in his solitude. Surrounded by books and the praises of his teacher, Will found peace in the seclusion of academic excellence, an umbral in the otherwise bright and outgoing student body. He preferred it that way.

With his intellect and his father's money, Will naturally secured a seat on one of the country's most elite private school. However, on the day of his enrollment, his father's limousine stopped in front of a local public school, a place run down and rough even for their affluent area.

"This isn't St. Vincent's." Will said, gripping the shiny leather strap of his new bookbag as a few unruly kids gawked and peered into the darkened glass.

"No it is not." His father drawled, uninterested by Will's distress as he leafed through his company's financial report. "No son of mine is going to go to some pansy ass catholic school. No ma'am. Your daddy grew up Lutheran and walked to school everyday. You will do the exact same thing and learn a little thing about hard work and dedication." The man puffed out his chest, overcame with a sense of self importance and misplaced pride. "That's how I got myself out of poverty and made my company."

"But they have college classes in St. Vincent ... and polo." Will lamented. He didn't really care much about polo. He just wanted to be near the horses. The boy found that animals makes for better friends than other kids.

His quiet answer somehow made his father angry. Jim Graham slammed his hand on the center console of the limousine and shouted, "College classes... *polo*? You think you're better than me, boy?!"

Will instantly answered with a practiced, "No sir." His whole body was rigid, hands clammy as they slid down his bag strap and onto his lap. His father never hit him, but Jim Graham was an expert in putting the fear of god into Will's tiny little boy.

The man sighed and grabbed the crystal decanter filled with cheap whiskey, muttering about spoiled whiny kids and how he didn't want children in the first place. "I shouldn't have listened to your whore of a mother." He grumbled, eyes looking far into the distance as he tr to sanitize the pain of his wife's passing with alcohol.

“Yes sir.” Will answered automatically. He knows better than to defend his dead mother when his father was in one of his tirades. The driver could hear everything through the glass partition, every unfair insult and thinly veiled contempt, but he didn’t dare to even glance back, not even to give comfort to the scared little boy

Will was alone. He’s always been alone.

“Now you walk there into your class and make some friends. What’s the use of all of your books if you can’t even look at a man straight in the eye.” Jim muttered. He didn’t need to say out loud just how disappointed he was at Will. The boy always knew that he wasn’t the son that his father wanted, and he has accepted it since he could read his father’s emotions.

It still didn’t it any less painful.

Like always, Will answered every demanding question with an obedient, “Yes sir.” And denied every weakness with a firm. “No sir.” When his father grew bored of his monotone answer, he threw open the limousine door and pointed his finger to his son.

“You go now boy, and don’t you dare come crying back to me about college classes and polo games, you hear me?”

Will nodded and promptly slid out of the luxurious vehicle to an empty schoolyard. The first period had already started and he missed it sitting there next to his drunken father. The boy stared at the tire tracks that the car left on the dirt, wishing his neck was under the wheels when it drove off.

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Hamilton high was a far cry of St. Vincent’s beautiful campus. Where the private school was situated in the beautiful wilderness of Virginia, this Texan public school lay on the outskirts of Austin’s gated community and its less fortunate suburbs. The building itself was sharp and

jarring, brutalist by style with grey concrete made it look more like a prison than a place of learning.

Upon entering the place Will was instantly faced with a trophy case, filled with a myriad football trophies and swim meet medals. Will's heart sank. Such an athletically focused school would mean stringent social hierarchies for which he will sink right onto the bottom. Will had no interest in sports, nor was he gregarious enough to win friends with his personality alone. No, Will was an outsider even in his kind and inclusive Montessori prep school. In this place, he certainly be a veritable outcast.

Still, Will stood tall and blinked away his tears. It would do him no good to be so negative before anything has happened yet. Who knows, maybe he'll click with someone in class. At least then he won't have to sit alone at lunchtime.

'Yeah.' He thought with an uncharacteristic cheer. *'I can do that. I can make one friend.'*

Satisfied that he had his goal for the day, Will turned to look for directions to the principal's office. Knowing his father's mercurial personality, the man probably only enrolled Will and nothing more. It didn't matter. Jim Graham was often away that Will has gotten used to settling all of his school's administrative needs.

Before he even got the chance to read the signage on the walls, Will walked straight into a group of large burly teenagers in the school's letterman jackets.

Will yelped and stumbled back, but he didn't cower. His brows knitted together as he glared up to the group of rowdy boys. Unfortunately for him, his piercing blue eyes caught sight of a pair of strangely reptilian orbs.

At first the large teenager held his gaze curiously, almost amused at the sight of the pretty freshman intent on killing him with his eyes alone. However, when his eyes lingered on the prominent scar on his lips, the amusement on Francis Dollarhyde's eyes was smothered by his deep seated insecurity and envy.

"What the hell are you looking at you little fairy." The boy growled, stepping away from the curious gaggle of football players to push Will up against the row of sloppily painted lockers.

Will gasped when one of the locks rattling and digging into the nape of his head, mind reeling as he was suddenly stuck in the most stereotypical situation ever to befall kids like him.

Just before Will was ready to spat out something he would surely regret, the school front entrance slammed open, revealing a group of muscular lithe teenagers, all carrying the school's sports bags with towels slung across their shoulders.

"Oh my fucking god. Look at those football meatheads." A condescending voice exclaimed. In an instant the tension in the room skyrocketed. "Are you seriously trying to get suspended on the *first* day Frankie boy?"

A cocky young man sauntered over, his pool slippers clapping almost comically across the floor. "If you are, then isn't it better to fight someone that can punch back?" He grinned. Though he had an easy smile dancing on his face, his light brown eyes held a manic energy to them. This boy was as dangerous as Francis Dollarhyde, two animals itching to prove each other's dominance over the other.

Will had hoped that this newcomer was enough to distract the angry teenager holding him up, but when Will tried to wriggle himself out of the man's grasps, he ended up getting slammed back again.

"This doesn't concern you Brown. Walk away." Francis growled. He turned his wrath towards Will. "You keep staring at my scar. You want one just like it? I'll cut up your pretty little face real good." he whispered menacingly.

Knowing that further struggle would just enrage the boy, Will ceased his tussling and looked away. His hands and legs fall limp, looking despondently at the approaching teenager in hopes that he might help him out of this predicament.

Matthew Brown stopped just a few feet short, his chest heaving hard when he caught sight of the little pone pinned under the quarterback's hold. Will blinked and looked away, ashamed that someone was there to witness his humiliation, but Matthew already had his sight on his, a hawk catching sight of his desired prey.

“Hey! Hey!” Matthew rushed over and pried Francis’s fingers off of Will’s shirt. “Jesus Christ man. Why are you so always so goddamn angry? You’re the quarterback Frankie. You’re supposed to be the brains of these fucking numb nuts.” He cackled, slowly inching Will away as he squared up to the burly football player.

Francis growled and Matthew answered it with that cocky smile of his, flicking his eyes over to give Will cheeky little wink. For a moment Will was sure that the two would erupt to a brawl, but after a good ten seconds of intense stare down, Dollarhyde move away, barking orders to his cronies and disappearing into the gymnasium.

Finally free of the terrifying man, Will’s knees buckled and he slid down onto the floor, feeling like he might burst into tears out of frustration. He remembered his father’s disappointed face and held everything, hiding the heels of his palm into his eyes and slapping his face.

He will not show weakness on the first day of school.

“Oof. I thought I was gonna have to fight him again.” Matthew laughed. “You stared at his scar, didn’t cha?”

Will nodded somberly. “I didn’t know I wasn’t supposed to.”

Matthew scoffed and waved his hand. “He’s a sensitive little pussy. Got knocked on the head too many times, that one. But you-” he grinned, taking Will’s chin into his hand. “You’re a tough one... but I still saved you, didn’t I pretty boy?” The boy grinned, his slender muscles visible just under the thin hoody that hid his still damp body.

Will stiffened, feeling like he was going to get swallowed by a whole different animal. Matthew threw his head back and laughed when he saw the beautiful boy clamped up again. “Oh relax. You’re so uptight baby. Come on, give us a smile, yes?” he grinned, leaning close enough that Will could smell the chlorine from his skin.

“Ugh, Brown. You’re such a fucking pedo.” One of the boys from his swim team called out. Matthew mumbled some reply, but his eyes was still locked onto Will’s face, aroused by the distress on the little boy’s face.

Before he could do anything, one of his teammates padded over and jerked him up. "Come on Matt. Coach is knock us both out for missing from the assembly."

"Yeah, yeah. Fine." Matthew grinned jumped up to his feet, letting himself be dragged backwards so he could keep his eyes on the boy he just saved. "See you later pretty bird." He called, winking and making little kissy noise that made him want to shrivel up and die. It was then that Will knew compared to Dollarhyde's straightforward aggression, Matthew Brown was a whole different beast.

Eventually the strength returned to his legs. Will stood up and wandered through the empty hall with a glazed expression on his face. He could hear the hum of the microphone from behind the large doors, but he too afraid to join the school assembly and faced the animal jungle of Hamilton High.

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As predicted, Will remained just as he was before; a studious wallflower who kept to himself and avoided eye contact. Most of his classmates left him alone, too wrapped up in their own anxieties about entering a new school to even care about some antisocial weirdo in their class. For that Will was grateful. Callous apathy is much preferable to the jarring contempt of Dollarhyde and Brown's unsettling's desires.

Months later when everyone's friend groups were established and insides jokes were shared, Will remained an outsider to the class, only speaking when spoken to and engaging with the words written in his textbooks.

A few curious boys and daring girls tried to approached him, but Will's social skill was so stunted that he ended up staring at them until they left him alone. Those awkward days replayed in his dreams like a broken record, robbing him of sleep, peace, and the chance for friendship.

Somehow his quietness made him unlikeable to the rest of the class. The kids began to notice his nice clothes, his expensive stationary and slick high-end backpack. Rumors began to circulate that Will was the boy in the fancy limousine. Suddenly his shyness was seen as snobbery, and to

a class where half of the kids came from blue collar households, such disparity in wealth was intolerable.

It's a very different thing to be a self-imposed hermit and to be outcasted by everyone in his grade.

Still, Will preserved, throwing himself into his work with a fervent dedication of a man with something to prove. When the mid semester assessment was up, Will was relieved to be moved up to more advanced accelerated classes. Friendship may have eluded him, but in a class full of other awkward nerds, Will found his place in the confusing student body.

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The bullying started innocuously. First it was just a flippant remark or two within his earshot, all of which Will consistently ignored. It wouldn't be proper for the son of a well-known tycoon to be seen brawling in the hallways. It would be even more embarrassing if he were to lose, a reality he accepted with his small stature and nonexistent muscles.

As the year progressed Will found himself shoved and pelted with tiny little notes. He didn't bother unrolling them, already aware of the crude insults written within. As long as they didn't engage with him directly, Will was more than happy to ignore them all. He's has learned to shut down his emotions and just take the abuse. It's a daily battle for sure, but it was one that he won with both composure and grace.

Will would like to imagine that his father would've been proud, but on his darker days, Will wished he could be the son of some poor and nameless dock worker so he could return each insult and jeer with a punch of his own.

The worst came when football tryout started and kids in his grade began training with the older seniors. Word got around that the school quarterback had some bad blood against him. Those desperate to be accepted into their tightknit group made it their mission to make Will's life miserable, eager wolf pups offering pittance to their alpha. It was pathetic, but even Will couldn't begrudge them for trying to fit in. It's something that he also wanted.

First it was the trash stuffed into his locker. Then it was his stolen clothes after gym. Will spent the rest of the day in his shorts and sweaty clothes, enduring exclams of 'eww!' and name calling like 'Gross Graham'. The worst was the gossip. Jealous classmates muttered about him cheating at tests, malicious boys spreading rumors about him being a psycho retard, and girls calling him gay after Will rebuffed their advances with his usual disinterest.

Matthew's hovering certainly didn't help.

On the outside Matthew Brown seemed like a helpful upperclassman eager to draw the unsociable rich boy out of his shell. The teachers certainly think so, often encouraging Will to try out for the swim team that Matthew captained to victory. "It would be good for you to get some exercise!" they said, but the only exercise Will gets was when he struggle away from Matthew's groping.

"Oh, you're a little cock tease, aren't 'cha?" The persistent sophomore laughed, wincing at the little rows of bite marks Will left on his wrist. He brought it up to his lips and licked away the welling blood. Today he cornered Will out on the fire escape, catching the boy on his way to class and grinding his erection against the terrified little boy.

Will spat what remained of Matthew's blood onto the floor, saying nothing in response, for he knows that Matthew would only twist it into some fucked up notion of romance. His silence only amused the swimmer even more.

"That's okay. I'm a patient guy Willy boy. I'm sure you'll come around soon." Matthew leered, leaving the boy before anyone could catch them in the uncompromising situation.

Alone and shivering from the images of what could've been, Will kneeled down and gathered his books, holding it tightly against his chest like a shield. Times like these made Will realize just how benign Dollarhyde's aggression was. At least the boy was honest in his dislike. Matt was like a snake, always slithering in the shadow as he waited for his next opportunity.

Will almost prefers Dollarhyde's aggression to Matthew's disgusting advances.

That night he came home to an empty house, his legs aching from the walk back. He sat on the counter and read the notes that the maid left him.

‘Hope you had a good day! Today’s dinner is Chicken Parmesan and collared greens! – Bella’

Reading the kind note made Will want to cry.

He sat on the marble counter and watched his dinner spin the high-tech microwave oven. Instead of the costmary ding, it sang a happy little song when it finished with it task. Will just sat there and just stared at the darkened screen, irrationally angry at the cheery song that seemed to mock him along with everybody.

He simply cannot live like this. Paranoia and stress became a daily norm for the boy. He was losing sleep, and it’s getting harder to concentrate with his schoolwork. If his grades started to slip, then he would be dropped from the advanced classes and have to rejoin the barbaric normalcy of his everyday classroom.

‘No.’ Will though fiercely. ‘*No more.*’

Armed with desperate determination and the Christmas money he squirreled away under his bed, Will took off on a sweltering Saturday afternoon and stepped into the dingiest, rowdiest bar he could find.

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If a New Yorker cartoonist would draw a caricature of the word ‘shithole’, he would certainly draw something that would resemble the bar Will smuggled himself into.

‘The Warring Stag’ was the name, and despite it’s highbrow title, the place was neither classy or refined. Unlike the newer, trendier places in Austin, the bar was devoid of women of thumping music. It was more of a pub, dark and filled with smoke, its’ patron grizzly and worn down as the furniture they inhabited. The floor was sticky with puke and spilled drinks, there was no air conditioning to vent out the slightly off odor of sweat and depression.

“How old are you kid?” The bartender asked. Will straightened up his back and surreptitiously went up to the balls of his feet, hoping to look taller than he was.

“Sixteen.” He said, a false bravado coloring his defiant tone.

The bartender and a few patrons on the counter laughed at his answer. “No you’re not.” He scoffed, and Will’s cheeks pinken, mortified that he was not being laughed by adults after enduring the jeering of children his age. “This is a bar, kid. No minors allowed.”

“I’m not trying to buy your alcohol.” Will replied.

“All the more reason for you to get the fuck out of here.”

“I’m looking to hire someone.” Will said, feeling slightly proud of himself for not stuttering in front of these low lives. The man grinned.

“Hear that you unemployed sack of shits? You’ve got a new potential boss to impress!” The bartender called out to the crowd of chuckling day drinkers. Will ignored him, eyes turning to scanned the room to find the right guy for the job

There’s a portly man with braided hair that made him look like Obelix from those silly comic strips. He’s got a mean face, but with his weight, the man would probably be laughed out of the football field or pushed into the pool like an overinflated beach ball. That is not the outcome Will was looking for.

On the bar there’s a thin man who eyed at Will like his presence was offending him. The snakelike gaze sent shivers up the boy’s spine, but he knew that compared to the hulking monsters of the football team, he would look like a shriveled toothpick.

Will looked around the room, ignoring the catcalls and jeering of unsavory but harmless men. He was not looking for harmless people. The kids in his school wishes him real harm, and Will needed someone who could match up to the malicious intensity of bored, jealous children.

Just as Will was giving up, he caught sight of a muscular shoulder hiding behind a booth. Where other patrons clustered around each other, this man was off to the side, dominating a whole booth for himself. *'A loner. Like me.'* Will thought hopefully.

He could see the man smoking a badly rolled up cigarette, tapping the ash off his death stick into an empty beer bottle. His knuckles were raised, scarred, and misshapen from frequent abuse. A fighter. Predator. *'No.'* Will thought. *'A killer.'*

A thrill overcame Will's small body, a instinctual warning system telling his body run away and save himself. It's the same instincts that has kept him save from both Dollarhyde and Brown, but the boy knew that if this man can inspire such fear in him, he would be perfect for the job.

The boy took one step towards the man before a tutting sound stopped him in his tracks.

"You don't want to mess with that one, kid." The bartender warned. For a moment Will's resolve faltered, but then he remembered the murderous gaze on Francis Dollarhyde's eyes and Matthew's Brown disgusting hands on his body. He shook his head.

"He's exactly what I'm looking for."

# Hope

## Chapter Summary

An incendiary meeting between Nigel and Will sparked a dangerous scheme that put them both in danger

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Hell was real, and Nigel was currently living through it.

He spent his last two hundred dollars on an eight ball he enjoyed alone in his room. It was a sad affair, mitigated only by the daze of cheap whiskey and eventual sleep. The high was definitely not worth the hangover, but after his messy divorce, Nigel would do anything for a distraction.

Thank god for his open tab at Warring Stag. The bar was as shit hole, but the beer was good and the egg sandwich was greasy enough to mop up whatever swill was left sloshing round in his stomach. For a man like him, such mediocrity was a luxury.

Sometimes he wondered that if he drank and snorted enough poison they would eventually kill him. There was an unwieldy force living under Nigel's skin, something unnamable that takes him over and fueled his body to do despicable things. Nigel blamed it for his wife's departure, for if he was a gentler man, Gabi would've stayed long enough to see that he's a man worth loving.

He would do anything to trade this chaos for another chance at winning her back.

A year has gone by and still Nigel couldn't get over her. It's pathetic really, for he didn't seem like a guy that would pine and mope over some lost love. He was the quintessential man's man. Masculine and rough in appearance, with a violent enough mannerism that would intimidate people to bend to his will.

Maybe that's why he was so glad to have Gabi. She dared to come close and love him when he was most unlovable. Nigel tried his best to give her the life that she deserved, but between the drugs, the violence, and his eventual bankruptcy, their marriage remained in constant turmoil.

Before he could sink further into his depressive moods, a small hand tapped Nigel on his shoulder. Instinctively he grunted and shoved it away. Nigel was in no mood to be social, nor was he interested in entertaining the barkeep's demands to pay his outstanding tabs.

"Excuse me..." A timid voice called, one that sounded much too young to be in this establishment. Nigel turned just a fraction of an inch just to catch a glimpse of its owner, but what he saw made him turn completely around and blinked hard in confusion.

A boy, or was it a girl? He's certainly pretty enough to be one, stood clutching his leather bag. Unbelievably blue eyes peered up from underneath dark curls, and they stared at Nigel with such intensity that it made him want to reach out and touch them. The boy was small even at his full height, his head barely even reaching Nigel's seated shoulder. The slender hands that touched him was gripping the straps of his bags, so obviously nervous that his nailbeds were turning white from the pressure.

He reminded Nigel of a nymph in those children's fairytales, ethereal without the annoying mischievousness, and holding an undeniable beauty that nobody could ever miss. It was strange to think about a boy like that, but just one glance was enough to revive Nigel from his hangover.

"Hi." The boy greeted shyly, looking so adorably uncomfortable in his oversized glasses and bouncy hair. "May I sit here?"

The smile that snuck past Nigel's defenses was instantly replaced with a hesitant frown. Torn defenses erected once more, the man put on his domineering persona and sneered. "Is this some kind of Chris Hansen type of shit? Not interested."

"Chris Hansen...?" The boy blinked, utterly confused and unamused. "Uh, no. I'm not a child prostitute."

"In case you are, I don't have any money. See?" Nigel smirked, reaching down to dislodge his pocket and turn them inside out. A crinkled sachet of condom fell out, and the boy instantly

balked at its golden shine.

The reaction was so pure and unrehearsed that Nigel couldn't help but explode into a full blown belly laugh.. "Alright, I believe you. No proper boy whore would jerk away from the sight of a magnum."

"I-" The boy started, stopped and scrunched up his nose, his face red with both embarrassment and exasperation. He stomped over and slid to the seat, his bag squeaking gratingly against the torn up cushion. "I want to hire you."

"Ha! As your boy whore?" Nigel grinned, crafting every word to tease and prod at the shy beauty.

"What?! No! And please stop talking about prostitutes." Will snapped, but instead of pulling back, Nigel merely grinned and thought about how cute he was all flustered like that. Will frowned at the man's playful expression and made an effort to put discipline his expression into a more somber one. "I'm serious. I'm having some trouble with people in school and I want to hire you as my bodyguard."

The ridiculous offer made Nigel scoffed. A bodyguard? For this obviously prissy rich kid? "Pass." He snapped, puffing on his almost burnt down cigarette.

"I have money." Will quickly said, flipping open his bag and started rummaging between his heavy books. A thick brown envelope was quickly produced and was placed onto the table. Intrigued, Nigel picked it up and riffled through the bills, eyes widening at the amount of money he found in there.

"It's all real." Will calmly insisted. "Ten thousand dollars to put you on retainer as my bodyguard."

The dangerous man raised his eyebrows at the word retainer. What kind of ten year old know that word anyways?

Sensing that he might be part of a silly prank, Nigel slammed the envelope down and glared at him. “Where did you get this?” He said, trying his best to menace the boy away, but he stood still, unflinching and silent, staring back at Nigel with the eyes of someone that has experienced much worse fates than mere growls and rumbles.

“Christmas money, birthday money, allowance.” Explained the boy as he fidgeted under Nigel’s gaze. Something about the man made him uncomfortable, but not in the way his father or bullies made him nervous, but a similar flutter that made him feel all warm and restless. “So, do you accept my proposition?”

“Big words for such a small boy.” Came the patronizing answer, Nigel leaning onto his forearms why unabashedly staring down the boy.

Out of every insult even he ever received, Nigel’s got on Will’s nerve and made him bristled. “I’m sixteen.” The boy lied, too embarrassed to reveal his real age.

The man didn’t even blink before he leaned back onto his seat and scoff.

“No you’re not.” The man declared, blowing smokes at the boy’s face. Will’s eyes watered and reddened, but he held his stare stubbornly. Nigel continued.

“Your balls even barely dropped and you’re still sound like a girl. You wear a fucking backpack, an expensive one I give you that, but a fucking backpack all the same. Plus you got that naive little look in your eyes that makes me think you still sleep with your teddy bears.” He extinguished his cigarette on his tongue and slipped it between his ears to save for later.

“I don’t know what’s your deal is but a pretty young thing in this shithole is obviously a con. Go find a sugar daddy or something, cuz if this is that type of scam then I ain’t biting. I only have ten bucks in my bank account and I sure ain’t spending it on you.”

“I’m not ten!” Will shrieked, more angry now than embarrassed. “And I don’t need a sugar daddy! I need a bodyguard because some kids at my high school are picking on me and I’m scared!”

Nigel raised his eyes at the loud outburst. His first instinct was to believe him, but the man has been around the block and he's been duped enough times to be cautious. Knowing that staring at the boy would only bring up dangerous emotions, Nigel turned to the enveloped to observe the money instead.

The bills held their own stories, speaking the truths that the boy felt so compelled to hiding. Some of it has been crumpled and folded, carefully smoothed out as if they were placed between leaflets of heavy books the boy obviously devoured. Some of them were crisp, but they were yellowed with age. Other looked like they were freshly drawn out of an ATM.

That small pile of pile of cash was evidence of his steadfast care and disciplined spending habits. He could just imagine the boy restraining himself in the candy isle, telling himself to be patient and save his money for something more important.

Nigel never learned that skill in life, which obviously contributed to his current situation. If he was more like this boy, maybe Nigel wouldn't drinking warm beer in a run down bar and sleeping in his depressingly desolate apartment.

Maybe he wasn't playing a prank after all.

"What's your name?" Nigel demanded, taking a much more serious tone as he regarded the boy with new eyes.

"Will. Will Gr-" Will stopped himself before he could carelessly give out his information. "Just Will."

Nigel rolled his eyes at the obvious slip up, though he secretly admired the boy's common sense, another thing he himself seem to lack.

"How old are you?" He asked again.

"I told you-"

“Don’t fucking lie to me.” Nigel growled, slamming the envelope down onto the table with a loud whack. The bar’s growing atmosphere immediately plummeted; the hum of conversation killed by the man’s violent outburst. The barman looked like he might speak up, but when he saw that Nigel was the one causing the commotion he immediately turned around to busy himself behind the bar.

One by one curious peering eyes left the two alone, adding another voice to building chatter that was just rudely cut short. Slowly the bar regained its mellow ambiance, but Will remained frozen in his seat, as pale as a corpse as he stared up at this man who looked more dangerous than he first thought.

*‘That’s good. The scarier he is the better he can protect me.’* Will thought, excited despite being utterly terrified.

“... fourteen.” He finally admitted.

Nigel nodded in satisfaction and broke his gaze away. It’s almost embarrassing how he would readily intimidate a boy just barely entering puberty, but Nigel hated liars, even when they only do so to protect themselves.

He’s had enough of dealing with two faced cunts.

After a heavy sigh and a conflicted ruffle of his own disheveled hair, Nigel put the money back into its envelope and placed it in the middle of the table. Will’s face fell, crestfallen at the ambiguous gesture, but when he looked up to Nigel his eyes still held hope.

In truth, a part of Nigel sympathized with the boy. With his face and obvious status, Will did look like the typical kid that would get picked on by others. He’s effeminate, beautiful, obviously brave and tenacious in ways that would get him into trouble, and he held a certain softness that appealed to Nigel in all the wrong ways.

There’s something special about the boy that was not just limited to his blatant beauty. There was a fight in him, the same that Nigel remembered before he fucked up his life. Unlike the rampaging beast that he was, the boy had a flash of intelligence to him that was showered by his fiery determination

Nigel was tempted to reach out and take the boy's clenched fist, to feel a raging youth with unlimited potential and a bright spark of hope.

Maybe if he could touch him, be near that little special spark of life, the dying embers of his own faded dreams could roar back to life.

But Nigel knew better than to do something so dangerous.

A lifetime of blood, mistakes, and burned bridges was enough evidence of his own foibles and folly. Nigel knew that he's a fuck up, a mindless beast driven only by immediate desires. He obliterated everything he touch, leaving only ruins as the legacy of his own unremarkable life.

Men like him should settle in a hole far from civilization and quietly wait for death. It would be better for everyone that way, and it would certainly be better if he could spare this promising youth the poison of his presence.

"Not interested kid. Go away." He growled, trying to brush the kid off with a cruel flick of indifference. When the boy's face fell to utter despair, Nigel had to bite his tongue and hold himself back.

Oh, how he longed to take back his words, to be his champion. To see that face brighten in awe and gratitude and demand his company as payment. Nigel was so lonely, the last of his passion wrung out of his already withering soul, and this boy was the oasis he needed after a lifetime of wandering around an endless desert

"I don't have time for your silly high school drama." He added for good measure, but instead of flinching away the boy turned desperate.

"You don't understand. These kids they--"

"Yeah, kids are fucking assholes. That's not new, kid. What's incredible is your silly fucking proposition. A few bullies and your reaction is to hire a thug to scare them off? How fucking

weak are you?" Nigel growled, ignoring the ache in his heart when the boy finally looked away in shame.

"Stand up for yourself kid." The man added gruffly, trying to gentle his voice and failing miserably at it. "Don't rely on anybody else to do that for you. You can only trust yourself in this world, the sooner you learn that the better off you will be."

Will bit down on his lips, trying to hold back his tears. "... but I am trying to stand up for myself." He added with a voice almost too small for Nigel to hear.

It was almost enough to break Nigel's resolve.

*'Stop it Ibanescu. Don't look at him. Don't give into the kicked puppy routine. You're always so damn soft for shit like that. Take your own advice and man the fuck up.'*

"Not. Interested." He said with a finality that left no more space for argument.

The boy blinked rapidly, his face red in humiliation as yet another defeat was added to his mountain of failures. For a moment Nigel thought the boy would cry, but Will merely nodded curtly, pocketed back his money, and walked away.

After only a few short seconds Nigel couldn't help but turn around in his seat and watch the boy's retreating back. Seeing his hunched shoulders made his stomach twist and churned. He looked so crushed that Nigel wasn't sure that anyone could piece him back together.

*'I can do it. I can sweep him up in my arms and tell him it's going to be okay. That's all he needed. A friend. An ally.'*

But Nigel knew better than to do something so foolhardy.

Steeling his resolve for the umptieth time, he silently wished the boy luck and resigned to erase him from his memories. He will remember his eyes though, and just how good it felt to be seen

as someone worthy and dependable.

Before he could turn around and finish his cigarette, a voice caught his ears and drew his attention back to the boy.

A man in a garishly loud Hawaiian shirt went down to one knee and clasped his hand around Will's shoulder. "Hey, I overheard your conversation." His slimy voice said. "You said you needed help? I can do that do that for you."

"You can?" Will pipped up, hopelessly happy at the appearance of a new savior.

Irrationally irked and bothered by this stranger, Nigel glared up at the source of the voice to intimidate him away from the boy. The man was oblivious of him, pouring an unhealthy amount of attention to the youth while wearing an overly eager smile.

"What's bothering you kiddo? Come here, sit by Tony and you can me all about it."

Recognizing the predatory leer from another inhabitant of this shitty part of town, Nigel immediately stood up, stomped over to the two, and shoved the man back into his seat.

"Stay down. You don't get to talk to him. *Ever.*" Nigel growled menacingly. He placed a protective hand around Will's shoulder and turned him towards the door.

"Hey! What's the deal?" Tony shouted, sweeping a beer bottle off the table in an attempt to one up Nigel's bravado. "You said you're not interested in this piece of ass, so just fuck off and let me have this piece of ass."

Will flinched at the man's words, his face turning pale when he realized that he's been talking to a child predator. He inched away from Tony and hid behind the gruff stranger, staring up at him with a look that made Nigel's heart and head war for dominance.

Nigel was perfect like that, knobby knuckles drawn tight and body tensed, as if every single muscle fiber in him was itching for a fight. Will wanted nothing more than to see him fight and imagine his tormentors at the ends of his fists. The thought was almost enough to make Will smile.

“Piece of ass? Call him that again and I will knock all of your fucking teeth out.” Nigel rumbled, and Will felt himself going warm with some unnamable emotion.

The man was made for Will. Intense attachment issues. A protective streak that borders of maddening aggression. A subconscious need to challenge anyone who might come near his property. The rush of energy as he move to shield him from other people.

The man was perfect.

“Yeah? Why don’t you fucking try me asshole!” Tony continued, and the crowd in the bar cheered, thumbing onto the table as they chanted, ‘Fight! Fight! Fight!’ Will almost had half a mind to join in, just to see Nigel protect him.

“Oh no. Fuck no, no, no! Take it outside boys!” The bartender demanded before any other words could be exchanged. The patrons groaned and booed, uncivilized men turning against the one who took away their money and entertainment, but Nigel was more than happy to obey.

“With fucking pleasure.” He muttered.

After giving Tony a look that could kill, Nigel made a beeline to the backdoor and kicked it open. The barman cursed when one of the handles flew off, muttering about Nigel’s bar tabs that was quickly overwhelmed by a bar full of cheering men.

Electrified by the crowd, Nigel raised a challenging eyebrow at Tony. “You coming, cunt?”

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Despite his father's insistence that they identify as Lutheran, Will was never religious. He didn't find god in the church pews or feel him during the droning hymns and psalms. Seeing Nigel in motion changed that, for if there was a god, then surely his aesthetic must be one of violence and men like Nigel was the perfect prophet to spread his gospel.

Amongst the cheering bar patrons, Will's faith in the man grew with every passing seconds. Money exchanged hands like bills passing into collection plates. One of the bookies stood on an upturned pallet box, corralling the clamoring crowd like a priest might gather his flock.

They were here to witness god's glory, wrapped up in the body of a mortal man, but only Will felt chosen, for Nigel's fist moved for him and he felt baptized in the blood that splattered across his face.

It was barely a fight. At first Tony swung hard at the man, attempting to knock him out to prove that he was the bigger man, but Nigel readily caught his hand and twisted down, using the man's own momentum to bring him onto the ground. After a brief tussle, Nigel mounted him and began his work.

From then on it was a massacre.

Nigel held the man's hands together in a powerful grip and pounded him into the ground. Face, neck, chest. Face, neck, chest. Like clockwork Nigel doled out his punishment, fists fueled by the living chaos that has been sitting dormant in his bones.

As the crowd cheered his hands moved faster. When they groaned and winced, Nigel's hands turned brutal, eager to show them a sight that would render them speechless.

Nigel feels alive like this, slamming his fist repeatedly into someone else's skull. The man below him whimpered, trying beg for mercy, but Nigel's hands moved so fast that they leave him no space to even breathe.

Eventually he stopped moving all together, barely alive and blinking red tears from one ruptured eye. A brave soul intervened and pushed Nigel off his body, and Nigel went along, a satisfied grin plastered across his face.

Now this was justice.

He joined the crowd, ignoring their pats and commendations to demand his own cut of the betting pool. The bookie frowned, but he wasn't going to cheat this monster of a man out of a few measly dollars. Afterall, he was smart enough to know that if Nigel didn't get his way, he would empty his pocket and rearranged his facial structure.

After the money was properly handed out, the quickly crowd dispersed, pouring back into the bar to celebrate or mourn the loss of their money. Nigel nodded to a few well-wishers, though when one of the man said, "Oh man, you should do this professionally." Nigel merely snorted and rolled his eyes.

That part of his life was done. Nigel was content scrounging up pennies from back alleys scraps so he could snort and drink himself into a sleepy stupor.

After bumming a cigarette from an overenthusiastic man, Nigel lit it up and watched as Tony came to and stumbled away in shame. "Good fucking riddance." He sneered, feeling especially vicious after the fight. Victory isn't enough, he was still itching for another fight, to throw himself against a worthy opponent that can at least punch him back and make him really *fight*.

Alas, he wont find such opponent here.

Still wired and on edge, Nigel opted away from the rowdy bar and took a seat on a pile of rotting pallet boxes. He inhaled his cigarette, hoping that the nicotine might be enough to calm down his raging adrenaline.

Before he could exhale the lungful of smoke, a familiar hand tapped him on his arm. He didn't have to turn and look to see who was asking for him. "Go away." Nigel growled, suddenly afraid that he might do something to the boy.

There was a hitch of hesitation, followed by the sound of anxious feet boring holes into the ground, but in the end the boy stayed, inching into Nigel's field of view with his hand clasped demurely in front of himself.

Suddenly Nigel didn't need the cigarette anymore. The sight of this timid boy was enough to quell the aggression within him, a switch to turn off the uncontrollable chaos running in his veins. It was like his body was automatically attuned to him, balking at the idea of even hurting the boy.

"Thank you." The boy mumbled, forcing himself to meet Nigel's eyes. "For saving me, I mean."

"I didn't do it for you." Nigel smirked, enjoying the flustered that he has suddenly grown fond of. "I just can't stand fucking pedos like him. Picking up little kids in bars. That shit is disgusting." Nigel flicked off the ash of his cigarette and leaned closer to the boy.

"And you." He jabbed a pointed finger into the boy's chest, surprised at how easily the boy stumbled with the barest of pressure. "Don't you have even an ounce of self preservation in that skinny body? Don't talk to handsy weirdos like him, dumbass."

"I was desperate."

"You were stupid, that's what you are." Irritation rising up, replacing the brief sense of calm that the boy previously inspired.

"Well I wouldn't need to talk to weirdos like him if you would've accepted the job!"

"You're still on that shit?" Nigel huffed, both irritated and impressed by the boy's relentless tenacity. When the boy gave him a look that made him all weak and soft, Nigel sighed, relenting a smidgen of curiosity to show through. "What the hell did they do to you anyways?"

Of course Nigel would ask him that. Will expected the question to come up, after all he was the one who brought it up in the first place. Yet when he turn to answer the man, his mind blanked before it was swarmed by the myriad of tormented memories.

How could he recount the horrible things that had happened to him? The constant threat of violence? The complete loss of control? How could he explain the profound sense of loneliness that permeated every second of his school life?

Even if he could find the words to describe those horrific acts, how could a man like Nigel would ever understand. What did he know about terror? How could he understand the impending dread of a new day when he walks around with such power in his hands?

They were two completely different people, extremes at opposite ends of an infinite spectrum, and Will realized just how silly he was to even approach the man in the first place.

“Go on, boy. Tell me.” The man demanded, but his eyes were no longer cold and apathetic. Those wild eyes were now at peace, deep red tinged with curiosity, and to an extent, sympathy, and they were enough to give Will the bravery he needed.

“Francis is the captain of the football team, and he’s really...” paused, trying to find the correct word to describe the endless bruises he got from him and his teammates. When words failed him, he slowly unbuttoned his shirt and showed Nigel the blooming blues and healing greens of his scratches and bruises. The man’s jaw stiffened, eyes zeroing on Will, demanding for an explanation. “I stared at him the wrong and he’s been tormenting me ever since.” The boy added weakly.

“He did this to you?” Nigel asked, flat and cold.

“His friends. Well teammates. Francis doesn’t have any friends.” Will shrugged. “He’s in line for a football scholarship so he sends his boys to do his dirty work, and everybody on the team is too scared to say no.” The boy paused before correcting himself. “Actually, I think some of them enjoys it.”

“Fucking pricks. Cowards, all of them.” Nigel’s hissed, his calloused fingers tracing every bruise, trembling with barely restrained anger. When he pushed Will’s shirt off to see the extent of his injuries, Nigel almost exploded. “Shit. What kind of psychopath bites people?!”

Will placed his hand over the healing bite marks, hiding the two dots of incisors that stood out under the black circle of bruise. Somehow this one was too humiliating for him to show.

“Matthew Brown gave that to me. He’s on the swim team and doesn’t like Francis very much. He helped save me from Francis once, and now he thinks I owe him.”

“Owe him what? Money?”

“Sex.”

“Fuuuuck.” Nigel gaped, rubbing the bewildered expression off his face. “What the hell is wrong with these fucking kids?”

“I guess it has something to do with jocks.”

“Fuck that. I wrestled in school and I never did any of that stupid shit.”

Will chuckled, somehow charmed by the small tidbit of information. “Well you did just punch a guy until one of his eyes bled.”

“Don’t remind me. It’ll just make me want to find him and blind his other eyes.” Nigel shook his head and pulled Will’s shirt back on. It was so sweet that Will didn’t have the heart to tell him that he was skipping buttons and putting it on askew. “Jesus darling, you gotta tell your teachers. Or the police. You want me to take you to the station?”

“No! Please no! My dad would kill me!” Will clasped Nigel’s hands together in a desperate prayer. “He already thinks I’m weird and weak, if he finds out I’m a tattletale too, then he’ll hate me even more!”

Nigel could feel his heart aching at the boy’s desperate pleas. “No parent would hate his kid for getting bullied.” He said, clasping his large hands over the boy’s nape.

“Well you haven’t met my dad yet.” Will pulled away with a somber look, more terrified of his father’s disapproval than the bearing more physical pain.

There was nothing Nigel could say to make this better. The boy was living in a nightmare. Friendless, tormented, and abandoned by the people who supposed to guide and protect him.

No wonder he turned to someone like Nigel.

Before he could offer words that would surely fail to comfort him, three figures stepped into the alley and casted a shadow over them. “What the hell do you fucking want?!” Nigel barked, sneering when he found Tony standing amongst the strangers. “You again?”

Before he could launch himself at them, Tony pulled out a gun and pointed it at them.

“You picked the wrong guy to mess with asshole.” The bloodied man grinned, eyes trained onto Will’s with a hungry gleam.

## Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3

# Lines

## Chapter Summary

Nigel and Will was captured by the three men and had to fight their way out to safety.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There's only so much a man can take until he break. Nigel saw it countless of time in the ring. Journeymen, champions, hungry up and comers; all fighters eventually tire and give up in their pursuit of glory. If they don't decide it first with their head, then their body's limits would do it for them. Knockouts, submissions, he's done it all, and for a man who never tasted defeat, Nigel was an expert in finding the limits of those who dared to face him.

Nigel's wasn't sure where his own limits lied. His short professional career remained untarnished by defeat, but even with such a pristine record Nigel wasn't arrogant enough to think that he's fast enough to outrun a bullet.

When the glimmering metal of the gun muzzle was revealed, Nigel instinctively raised his hands and moved to shield Will from their sights. Even with his quick reaction, the three villainous scourges still caught sight of him the boy, their pupils dilated with a mixture of greed, lust, and promised mayhem.

It angered him to no ends. People like them only sow pain and anguish wherever they went. He can handle those sort of fuckers easily enough, but with the boy right behind him, rushing them down would mean putting the boy in further danger.

He has never been a man who was predisposed to heroic endeavors, but after hearing what the boy has been through, Nigel couldn't help but feel protective of him. He's a lot like him, surviving in the edges of people's tolerance. While he could weather the consequence of living like that, Will was simply too young to be able to handle himself.

Still, no matter how much Nigel wanted to protect him even against guns and villains, there's a limit to what a man can do.

With threats of bullets and shouted obscenities, they were quickly corralled away into the back of a rickety old van. The car was deplorable, and with the pipes welded on its side, it was clearly modified for to transport unwilling occupants like them. Nigel quickly realized that they're in deeper shit than they expect.

With his wrist painfully zip tied together, Nigel could only watch as the man in Hawaiian shirt pulled Will onto his lap and whispered things that made the color drained from his face. Still, Will gritted his teeth and furrowed his brows, unwilling to show these men just how deeply their words affected him.

Though he put on a brave face, Nigel knew that Will was terrified on the inside.

The ride was bumpy but short, and before long the men corralled them both into a squalid room with rows of chains attached along the ceiling. After hooking Nigel up to one of them, they sat Will right before him so he may witness to the coming onslaught.

"It's okay kiddo. We'll be fine." He lied, trying to ease the boy's distress, but Nigel knew that he was too smart for empty promises and terribly hidden lies.

The boy looked up and mouthed silently. "I'm sorry." His eyes brimming with emotions that a boy like him should not even consider. Those simple words added to the pile of weighing guilt inside Nigel's gut, but before it could reach up and strangle his heart, Tony's two cronies returned and began beating him with their fists.

Times like these made Nigel wish he still had his six packs. At least with them he could clench them enough to lessen the pain.

With the man sufficiently scuffed, Tony finally emerged from the dark, shoving his friend away so he could personally rummage through Nigel's pockets. He found the winnings that Nigel earned from his fight and kept it for himself, his thin lips flattening into a disparaging scoff as he examined the contents of his wallet.

“Nigel Ibanescu.” He sneered, snapping his drivers license and discarding over his shoulder. “That’s a damn FOB immigrant name if I ever heard any.” The men behind him cackled and slapped Nigel from behind his head. “You know what they call me?” Tony grinned.

“Shit stain pedo fuck-“ Another slam from a bat cut his words short. “...fucker.” Nigel grimaced, spitting the last word along with the blood filling his mouth.

“The boogeyman.” He declared with a sickening look of satisfaction. “People fear me, that’s why the boss pays me the big bucks. How the hell are they gonna be afraid of me when I show up to work with my face looking like this?”

Nigel peered from one swollen eye, smirking at the state of Tony’s lips. “Shouldn’t have tried picking up underage little boys. That shit is creepy as fuck.” He said, not at all bothered by threats of danger in front of him.

Tony gave Nigel a smile that was as crooked as his morals and stood up, leaving Nigel to stew as he circled the petrified boy behind of him. Knowing how much it would irked Nigel, he placed a hand on Will’s shoulder, a plan slowly sliding down Will’s chest to feel the coles sweat beading on his smooth skin.

The sight made Nigel growled and trashed in his chains, but his struggled amounted to nothing. The two men behind him clothes, kicking him between them as he swing helplessly from the ceiling.

“Thanks to you now I can take this pretty little thing in and show him off to the boss.” Tony purred, combing his dirty hands through Will’s hair and forcing the boy to meet his eyes. The man gave a low rumbled, rubbing the hardening length of his cock on the back of Will’s hair.

“Damn... look at that fucking face. Someone’s gonna pay a pretty penny for you.” He purred, savoring the look of sheer terror building behind the boy’s eyes. “I’ll still fuck you though. Gotta make sure the merchandise is good, eh boys?” The two goons answered him with hoots and snickered, both looking like they just couldn’t wait to try Will’s ass themselves.

Hanging from his chains Nigel quickly realized the implication of Tony's words. These aren't just thugs coasting off the social viscosity of an uncaring world. They're dangerous men who actively use others for their own gain. Trafficking, exploitation, racketeering... Nigel wouldn't be surprised if they would stoop down to the level of murder just for profit. A bane to all humanity, the world will be better off without them in the world.

Chuckling at the glare thrown his way, Tony barked out an order in an indiscernible language. His men nodded and left Nigel with one last kick, but they quickly returned with tarnished metal bats, all bent and worn from repeated use.

"Wait! Please you can't use that. It'll kill him!" Will spoke out, turning around to grasp at Tony's arms in an attempt to plead his case.

"That's the idea princess." The pedophile said, leaning down to breathe deeply of his scent. Will hitched his breath, frozen not by the proximity of the disgusting man, but from the idea that Nigel might die because of him.

This was all his fault. He shouldn't have gone out and asked for help. He should've stood up for himself like Nigel told him, told a teacher or something. Surely his father's disapproval would be worth Nigel's life.

The man already fought for him, he shouldn't die for Will too.

"Please stop." He whispered, pushing his small body up against Tony's. "I'll do anything you say. Just please don't kill him."

The boy's desperate pleas sent the men around the room in a round of hoots and jeers, but Tony held his gaze with renewed hunger. "You nasty little whore." He growled, slipping the gun into his waistband so he could paw Will's body. The boy whimpered and forced himself to lean into the touches, telling himself that it will all be worth it.

Tony hummed in approval and palmed his cock, and Will forced out a shy little moan, hoping that it would be enough to entice the men away from Nigel. "Fuck. What a slut. Look at him. He's practically begging for it." Will's cheeks pinkened at the disparaging comments, but he closed

his eyes and moaned louder, praying that Nigel wouldn't think less of him for doing something like this.

The men fell silent, their breaths growing heavy as they watched Tony play with his new little toy. One by one they abandoned their bats and moved closer to enjoy the show. Sensing their distraction, Nigel swung back and kicked off the wall, nailing both men by the back of the head and sending them sprawling into the ground.

Knowing that he only had one chance, Will snatched Tony's gun from his waist and escaped from his claiming hands. "Get back!" He shouted, hands shaking as he aimed weapon right on Tony's head.

The man laughed, not at all bothered by the threat of a gun in front of his face. He kicked one of his men and cursed at his uselessness, inching towards Will with the confidence of a man who has already won "You're not going to shoot me." Tony drawled, but his lackadaisical smile instantly evaporated the moment a bullet whizzed past his head.

"I will." Will said, his unsteady voice as loud as the bang of the gun. Tony swallowed hard and raised his hands, quietly backing away lest a bullet might embed itself in his body. "You. Get him out of there. Now!" He shouted to the two grounded men. They quickly complied, scrambling up to release Nigel from his chains like the cowardly animals that they were.

Landing on the ground with a huff, Nigel rolled back his shoulders and regarded Will with new respect in his eyes. "You did good kiddo." He said, and promptly hooking one of the men in his arm and putting him to sleep. The other man just stood there and watched, but before he could escape, Nigel pulled him down with practiced ease and choked him. He lost consciousness within seconds, body dropping with a loud thud.

"Pussies." Nigel spat, the energy inside his body coming alive as he triumphs over his opponents one after another. He turned his sights to Tony, hands itching to bury themselves back into his battered face, but a small click caught his attention.

"Will." Nigel called, but the boy didn't even look at him. He had this look in his eyes, not fear, not remorse, just an unmitigated anger that has been building up from the endless abuse of others. "Darling." Nigel tried again. "Give me the gun."

Will bit his lips but did nothing. Everything in his body wanted to rush over to Nigel and hide behind him, to let the man handle the situation and protect him like he wanted. Still, Nigel's words rang inside his head.

*"A few bullies and your reaction is to hire a thug to scare them off? How fucking weak are you?"*

Will swallowed hard and pulled on the hammer. He's done being weak.

Before he could squeeze the trigger, large calloused hand found his and pushed the gun from his line of fire. The bag of the gun was deafening, but the bullet whizzed and imbedded itself into a wall.

"Shit." Nigel winced, flinching away from the hot barrel he diverted. His palm was red and welted, burned by the hot barrel of the gun. His muffled exclamation was finally enough to pull Will's attention to him.

"Nigel... I-I..." Will whispered, horrified at the thought of injuring his savior.

Nigel shook his head and hid his hand behind his back. "Trust me kid, you don't want to have blood on your hands." He said, gently brushing his raised knuckles over Will's pale cheeks. "Why don't you just hand me the gun, alright darling?"

Will nodded numbly and finally let go, the gun suddenly too heavy for him to hold up. "I'm sorry." He mumbled, looking down to avoid Nigel's eyes. The man must be so disappointed in him. Will wanted to show him that he could fight back, that he's not some cowardly kid he could dismiss.

None of the imagined insults and barked abuses came. Nigel merely placed his hands over his shoulders and pulled him close. "Nothing to be sorry about." He rumbled softly, so completely pound and in awe of the brave boy in front of him.

Breaking the intimate moment they were sharing, Tony erupted in a strangled laugh. "Knew you were too chicken shit to do it." He bawled, half crazed with relief and fear. Nigel turned to him,

furious for his interruption. With one big punch, He sent Tony slumping onto the ground. With his legs sprawled out like a limp ragdoll, Nigel stepped on both of his knees, breaking them with a sickening crack.

“Fuck you, you piece of shit!” He growled, grabbing the man by his hair and delivering blows after blow onto his face. The skin around his last surviving eyes blacken and swelled shut, blood streamed down his neck and seeped into his clothes, but Nigel didn’t stop. He couldn’t. The man deserved to be punished, and he will take his sweet time delivering it.

Will didn’t flinch from the utter brutality Nigel showed. He stared down at the man and saw all the crimes he had ever committed, a quiet sense of calm spreading over his body as Nigel gave Tony what he deserved. One by one his tormentors’ face flashed took over the man’s mattered ones. Matthew. Francis. The nameless jocks that made his life hell. He imagined them all in Tony’s place, and it felt righteous.

He closed his eyes and savored the feeling, holding onto the picture of blood and fury to keep himself hopeful in the future.

A large hand was placed over his shoulder and broke through his reverie. “Hey.” Nigel said, wiping the blood from his knuckles onto his jeans. “Did I scare you?” he asked, a wild beast forcing itself to soft and gentle to him.

Will shook his head and smiled, and it was enough to quell the fire that rushed through Nigel’s veins. “Come on. Lets get out of this shithole.” Nigel murmured, offering his hands to him.

Just as the boy reached out to take it, Tony pushed himself off the ground and croaked out. “You’re dead. You both are. I’ll fucking find you and kill you all!”

Nigel gritted his teeth at the threat, knowing full well that he was not the type of man to take such humiliation lightly. If they walk away now more will come in the future, and Will would be pulled back into this nasty business again.

Nigel was the one who brought him into this mess. He’ll have to be the one to finish it too.

He gently led the boy out of the room and sat him on a seat of stair. The night air was cool enough to make the boy shiver, so Nigel pulled off his jacket and draped it over his shoulders. "Wait for me here, okay darling?"

"But-" Will protested, too shaken to be left alone. Before he could ask the man to stay, a grim determined look in Nigel's eyes made him still. The boy pulled the jacket close around himself and nodded.

Nigel smiled and smoothed down the boy's hair, undoing the mess that Tony hands left. "And whatever you hear in there, don't peek in." He said, breath hitching as Will nuzzled into the welt on his palm. "You've seen enough ugliness for today."

Will breathed in the rusty scent of blood and gunpowder, finding it oddly calming when it came from the man's body. "Are you going to do something ugly?" He asked, looking up at Nigel with a look of fear. The boy was afraid, not of him, but for him.

Nigel buried his hands on Will's chocolate locks and stared down at him with a pained expression on his face. People don't usually look at him like that. It made his heart tremble with an unnamable longing that he just couldn't place.

"I'm going to do something necessary." He said, and the boy stared at him with a look of complete understanding and acceptance. Will nodded and held his hands against his cheeks.

"Okay Nigel." He whispered.

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He found Tony on the ground, crawling slowly on the ground like a despicable insect ready to be stomped. "Get away from me!" The man screamed, but Nigel merely eyed him quietly and said nothing in return. He went to one of the unconscious men and held his hands beneath his jaw. With a sharp jerk, he broke his neck and felt the pulse under his palm still into nothingness.

The crack made Tony whimpered out pathetically. “Don’t do this man.” He pleaded, crawling away with renewed effort, but every one of his movement was hindered by the pain in his legs. Nigel ignored him, kneeling down behind the second man and repeated the process. “Fuck!” Tony sobbed, bloody tears running down his ruined face as he heard the life leave the body of his friends .

When Nigel was finally on him, Tony’s whimpers and sobbed has quieted down to a ragged breath. He regarded the man through a narrow slit of his eye, holding his hands as if it was enough to stave away the man’s advance.

“Don’t kill me man. What do you want? Money? Or... or drugs? I got plenty.” He stuttered, all of his bravado gone as he faced his executioner.

“You shouldn’t have threatened him.” Nigel muttered, reaching out with unyielding grasp to take the man’s head in his hands.

“I’m sorry! I won’t touch him, I swear! I’ll-“ But a sharp, clean jerk silenced his desperate pleadings.

Nigel let the man head lol to the side as his body fell with a muffled thud. He didn’t linger on the corpses he left, his mind numbed by the horrific act he just committed. Instead he gathered his wallet and discarded license. Nigel left his winnings in Tony’s pocket, the rustled green paper now tainted with a memory he was eager to erase.

Before he left the scene, Nigel forced himself to look back on the carnage before him. Three men laid on the ground, made lifeless by his hands. Blood began to pound in his ears, but instead of the energizing force that his chaos usually provided, Nigel only felt empty.

He’s a killer now. He’s crossed a line that no man should ever come near to, but despite the obvious moral quandary of his actions, Nigel didn’t regret a thing.

Their lives are a worthy exchange for Will’s safety. If it ever comes to this again, Nigel would not hesitate to do this again.

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Though regret and guilt didn't come to greet him like he expected it to, Nigel walked out of the torture room with a strangely unsettled feeling in his chest. It's as if something had changed inside of him. He knew that he wasn't a good man. Nigel has always been the troubled kid, the violent asshole, the disappointment to his mentors, but this act of murder awakened something in him that Nigel wasn't sure was meant to be roused.

He could confess. Walk up to a confessional booth or a police station and try to clear his barely giggling conscience. Afterall, that's what people do after committing a crime, right?

Still, the cold swift execution didn't feel like a crime. There was something strangely satisfying in the act, like putting back something broken and settling it in its rightful place. The world was better off without Tony and his men, and for that, Nigel refused to feel bad for his actions.

The persisted cloud that weighed over him dispersed the moment he stepped out and saw Will perched delicately on the steps. The boy waited for him, still wrapped up in his old leather jacket, even holding it close so it would engulf his body completely. When he noticed Nigel's arrival, the boy stood up and immediately run over to him.

*'You sweet little thing.'* Nigel thought, his cold heart warmed at the sight of him.

"Are you okay?" He asked, little hands stopping short of touching Nigel's. The man sighed and finally relinquished his control. With the same hands that ended lives, he pulled Will close and embraced him, savoring the comforting feeling of someone worrying about him. It was more than he could ever deserve.

"Nigel?" Will asked again, his small body stiffening, so unused to something as simple as a hug.

"Just... stay like this for a sec, okay?" Nigel whispered, his voice cracking as he hunched down to bury his face in Will's curls. In the tight embrace of his arms, Nigel could feel the minute nod

of the boy's head, how his body slowly relaxed and melted against Nigel's, small hands hugging him back just as tight.

## Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3

# Sustenance

## Chapter Summary

After escaping from Tony and his goons, Will and Nigel took refuge in a small diner.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

In the aftermath of their daring escape, Nigel and Will untangled themselves awkwardly from one another. As they walked Nigel kept his hand on Will's shoulder, preventing the boy from straying too far. It wasn't a conscious decision, but after going through the things they did, the man was reluctant to let the boy away from his sights.

He was a trouble magnet. Beautiful people tend to be that way. His darling Gabi was the same in that regard, though most of her troubles were brought on by her carelessness and penchant for cocaine. Nigel regretted ever using around her. What was supposed to be a one-time indulgence in the bedroom sent them spiraling into addicts who cared very little for each other.

Usually one to balk away from physical touch, Will found himself leaning comfortably back into Nigel's comforting hold. There was something different about the man that made it easy to accept his possessive touches. Maybe it's the adversity they shared, maybe it's just a primitive desire for comfort and companionship. Will didn't particularly care to dissect his own motivations. It felt safe here with Nigel, and he didn't want the man to stop touching him at all.

As they moved from the rundown suburban sprawl and into a much safer neighborhood, a friendlier scenery began to pop up and greet them both. The trees there were well watered and green, and trash went to its respective receptacles instead of littering the sidewalks. Those simple signs of human civility brought peace to both of them, and Will finally relaxed his grip on Nigel's jacket that he held on like a mystical bulwark against evildoers.

"You hungry?" The man asked after a long stretch of silence, pointing to the bright neon lights of an open diner.

Though he didn't think he could stomach anything after what they've been through, Will nodded anyways. Being with Nigel was nice, and as eager as he was to forget about Tony and that

dreaded torture room, Will didn't want to be parted from his gruff protector just yet.

Together they entered the humble greasy spoon, finding a seat in a bright red booth that was as worn as the patrons it supported. They almost looked indistinguishable from the other customers, just a kindly brother with his younger charge, though the ruffled nature of their clothes made it clear that they've gone through some very hard times.

Though he hated standing out, Will still looked around in awe. The half empty pie case, the loud till overflowing with faded register paper, even the tired waitress behind the fascinated him to no end. He's even been in lavish restaurants and upscale lunch clubs, usually dragged by his father when he's in his better moods, but this humble scene of traditional Americana was a delight to the sheltered little boy.

It felt like home, warm and welcoming in ways that his house never truly was.

As they took their seat and picked up the menu, a waitress in a bright red hairnet came over and greeted them with a smile.

"Hello there, welcome to the Good Grubs . Can I get you some coffee?" She offered, and Nigel quickly agreed. It was the cheapest thing on the menu. He didn't want to look like a penny pincher, but his finance wasn't exactly in the green these days. Still, he wanted to treat the boy to a warm meal, so if he played his cards right, tonight he might be able to get them both something good with minimal overdraw.

The boy deserved that, at least that's what Nigel thought as he watched Will sipped on the thick sludge of diner coffee and made a face at its bitter taste. An involuntary chuckle escaped the man's lips, pleased at seeing something childish from the boy who was much too mature for his age. Despite his fearless show of defiance earlier, Will remained an innocent child indeed, and Nigel felt compelled to keep him that way.

It's strange to realize that this was same boy who pointed a gun at Tony earlier. Here Will looked no different than any other children that Nigel encountered before in his life. His act of bravery has elevated Will in the man's mind, putting him beyond reproach or his usual surly behavior. It ate at him that he couldn't give him something better than some shitty burnt diner coffee and a cheap meal. The boy deserved more, for this strange little angel has fallen into his charged dirtied himself in the fucked-up mire of his terrible life.

Without even a second thought, Nigel found himself waving down the waitress to catch her attention again.

“Give him some tea instead. The nice fruit ones with the bags. And honey, lots of it. The real kind, not those squeezey bear bottles that’s more corn syrup than the real deal.” He said, pulling the cup of coffee away from Will’s to spare him from further torment.

Recognizing a kind gesture from a man who hasn’t seen much of it in his life, the waitress smiled and wrote down their orders. “That will cost extra. Is that okay?” She asked without derision. Usually she would be eager to help part a demanding customer from his money, but she would hate to swindle a fellow working man from his hard earned dollars. She’s just not that type of woman.

“It’s fine.” Nigel said, eyes softening when he caught sight of Will’s worried eyes.

“I’ll pay for it.” The boy insisted, already rummaging through his bag for his wallet. Nigel shook his head.

“You want a burger? You look like you could use a burger.” Before Will could answer, Nigel was already telling the waitress to bring out their house patty complete with all of the fix ins. When Will leveled him with a worried look, Nigel merely waved his hands nonchalantly. “My treat.”

“You can’t afford it.” Will said weakly, looking like he’s just committed a robbery. “I’ve seen your wallet. It’s empty.”

“I have a credit card.” Nigel quickly countered, flashing the worn blue card to ease the boy’s concerns. Will leaned close and squinted to read the half faded digits on the plastic.

“It’s expired.” Came the deadpan response.

“Debit card then.” The man growled, throwing his one working card onto the table. Will scrutinized it carefully before handing it back. “Relax you twitchy little brat. God, I’ve never seen anyone so rich be so fucking uptight about money.”

*“That’s because it’s not your money!” His father shouted, throwing a silver platter perched on a petrified waiter’s hands. “I won’t have you grow up to be spoiled little brat, or I swear to god, I’ll send you to a dammed convent where they’ll feed you gruel for the rest of your miserable life!”*

Will shivered at the memory of his father’s screaming. He wanted some company for dinner and made Will come with him to the restaurant. Unfortunately, he had a few too much to drink and took it out on Will, who asked the waiter what foie gras was and if it was any good.

That was the time Will decided to hoard his allowance. If his father felt like it, he was sure that he’ll cut off his inheritance within a heartbeat.

They waited for their food in silence, with Will still wildly uncomfortable and Nigel staring at the boy as fatigue started to set in. It felt like he was just in the gym, that same bone deep soreness that pulled on his joints and muscles. He liked the feeling, for only then was his chaos subdued and his mind quiet. With nothing else to do, Nigel settled in and just watched the boy, admiring at how much spirit that small battered body could hold.

He was reminded of his short time as a prizefighter. So many men entered the octagon with false bravado to signal their manhood. The truth was every one of them was scared shitless up there, for who in their right mind would willingly allow other people to pummel them silly for money?

Yet amongst the madmen he faced there none of them could hold a candle to the boy’s tenacity. He’s been through so much, enduring torments day after day and still holding onto hope. It’s captivating really, for as much as fighters boast about endurance, they know nothing of the anguish that cruel children can do to each other.

On the back of his mind, Nigel could feel the quiet admiration growing into something deeper, the same obsession that kept him chasing after Gabi until he made her his. Still. He couldn’t be bothered to brush it off. It was so peaceful here with Will, and touching something as pure and good as he was made Nigel think that maybe he could be pure and good too.

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Nigel's gaze felt heavy on him, but unlike the ones that his schoolmates threw at him, it didn't make Will whiter or shrivel into nothing. Instead, his eyes were warm, proud in a way that he sometimes wished his father's gaze would look like, and kind in the imperious way powerful men might look at those weaker than they were.

In another life Nigel would probably won't ever look at Will twice. They were from completely different world. The brutal, way he handled their kidnappers reminded will of a wild animal, something savage that could barely be contained in his own body. Now, the man was a veritable housecat, almost purring in delight in his company.

He understood the man on many levels; his strength, the fatalistic drive that fueled his uncontrollable power, his proudly held personal code that was as unplumbed as his motivations to spend money he didn't have – yet for the life of him Will couldn't figure him out. There was good Samaritans, people who help strangers out of the goodness of their heart, then there's Nigel, a man who refused his money and beat a man half to death for trying to pick him up.

The man was confusing, and the warmth he inspired in Will's belly certainly didn't help clear things up.

When their orders finally came, Will was almost relieved because he thought that Nigel would finally ease his unrelenting gaze, but his eyes remained fixed, eager to see Will's reaction. The boy peered down to the plate of food before him. For a seven-dollar burger the portion was massive, further enlarged by the greasy fries that was half cold and half piping hot.

"I never had a burger before." He said just to give the man the reaction he was looking for, a tinge of excitement rising over the fabled hamburger he's never allowed to have

"What?! That's unpatriotic." Nigel shook his head, wondering what other sordid hell the boy was forced to endure.

Will didn't look too bothered. He merely shrugged his shoulders and peered under the sesame bun. "I never had fries before either. Phyllis always makes healthy meals for me. Chicken, fish, veggies. You know, that sort of stuff." He poked at the bright green pickles sticking to the patty, wondering at the amount of chemicals they inject it with to make it look so green.

"You always call your mother by your name?" Nigel frowned, confused by the boy's uncharacteristic show of impertinence.

"She's not my mom." Will frowned, completely unimpressed by the half wilted vegetables stuffed between the meat and bun. "Phyllis is the maid that works at our house. My mom left me when I was a baby. At least, that's what Daddy told me." He said, without an ounce of sadness.

Nigel stopped and frowned. As terrible as his parents were, they were still there for him during his turbulent adolescence. He drove them both nuts for sure, but what they lacked they made up in their presence and support. Sometimes that's all that a kid needed.

This boy grew up without a mother, his father only present to push on his own ideas of manhood, and still held had a certain gentleness that other boys would happily discard for acceptance and friendship.

Not Will. The boy remained authentically himself, strong in ways that men lacked, and wise in ways that other children were not. As a man, it's not hard to pretend to be brave to protect what was theirs. Their society practically demands it of them, but to find one capable of genuine strength and gentleness was something else entirely.

Nigel knew that Will was special the moment he set eyes on him, but now there was this gnawing need inside to hold him close and make him his.

It disgusted Nigel entirely.

It wasn't something that stemmed from an untowardly place. Nigel didn't want to kiss the boy, or take in in ways that only pedophiles and miscreants wanted. He wanted to make the boy his, to take him under his wings and dominate his days with the thought of him. Surely his presence would be no more damaging than the cruel people he's constantly surrounded by.

After the horrific stories and the obvious absence of an uncaring father, his presence would be a balm. He could be good for the kid, a brother figure who can protect him like he wanted to. Nigel could teach him to how, how to stand up for himself when he wasn't around to protect him, and when he had no one else to turn to, Nigel could be his refuge, always ready to listen and show him the things he missed out on life.

He could find salvation with this strange beautiful boy. He could learn to be a man again, but such hopeful thoughts were immediately derailed by the obvious wreckage of his life. It wouldn't be right to subject Will to the corruption of his presence. Between the fighting, the drugs, and his current state of bankruptcy, Nigel couldn't even begin to start helping himself, let alone other people.

Before him sat a creature of potential and purity. Of course Nigel wanted to be near the boy. That's all he was, a leech that latches on people's lives to make the emptiness of his own seemed smaller. If anything, he would only bring trouble, for as magnificent as the boy was, he could never withstand the chaos that trailed after Nigel and lived in his veins.

Even being here with his was a mistake, but Nigel couldn't help himself. He was drawn like a moth to a fire, but he knew that he would not be the one to burn up. A parasite like him survives by smothering other's people's life. A simple embrace would suffocate the boy and extinguished the very spirit that made him beautiful.

Maybe his fatalistic mood was brought on by the lack of mind altering substance in his system, but Nigel wasn't going to ignore his hunch and sent yet another person down the wrong path.

"Can I- I mean, may I?" Will politely asked, startling the man from his miserable musings. The Nigel looked was beyond apologetic, for the boy's stomach rumbled audibly as he looked to Nigel for permission.

"Yeah kid, go ahead." Nigel said, busying himself with adding honey into Will's peach tea to hide the guilt building up inside him.

The monstrosity of a meal looked even bigger in his small hands, but Will gripped it with determination, tilting his head here and there to ascertain the proper way to attack the piece.

Nigel had to bit down on his lips so not to laugh and startle the boy, but when his eyes went as wide as saucers, the man couldn't hold back a small chuckle from escaping his lips.

"It's good, eh?" He smiled, feeling oddly proud for showing the boy something he enjoyed.

Will hummed and nodded vigorously, taking another big bite and almost choking on an ambitious piece of morsel. Amused by his voracious appetite, Nigel slid over the cup of warm sweet tea. "Slow down there. Here, drink this." He said, watching with a small fond smile. His laughter was renewed when Will sipped on it and crumpled back against his seat, boneless and warm.

"It's like getting a hug." The boy whispered, cradling the cup close to his chest, a satisfied smile lighting up his beautiful face.

"Yeah it is." Nigel said.

Before he could stop himself, Nigel was already leaning forward and wiping a bit of ketchup from Will's cheeks. He noticed his own grumbling stomach but promptly ignored it. Just seeing the boy eating and happy was sustenance enough for his soul. They've both earned this, Will with his warm meal and Nigel with this small measure of light that brightened his violent life.

Will took a few more messy bites, smearing even more ketchup around his recently cleaned mouth. His eyes flickered to the man grinning stupidly on his seat. Eager to share what little happiness he found, he stood up on his seat and held the burger aloft for the man bite. "Try it Nigel! It's soo good!" He said with his mouth full.

Nigel melted at the sight and couldn't bear to say no to the boy. He leaned down, fully engulfing the boy's wrist in a gentle hold. *'So fucking small.'* He thought as he took small bite.

Will frowned, unhappy with the brash man's sudden show of restraint. "Take more." He almost ordered. Nigel grinned playfully and obliged him, chomping down to take a bite so large that almost half the burger was gone from sight.

“Hey!” Will giggled, pulling his meal back protectively. Nigel snorted and quickly sipped on his coffee, trying to avoid choking this time around. The burger in his mouth was the very definition of mediocre but seeing Will so animated made Nigel grin like an idiot.

“You said to take more.” The man comically raised an eyebrow, making the boy giggle even more. For the first time since his separation with Gabi Nigel felt like he belonged in the world, even if his place in time here, sitting across a little boy sharing a cheap, greasy burger in some unremarkable diner.

The boy was remarkable to make up for everything else.

## Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3

# Symbiosis

## Chapter Summary

Will put his proposition back on the table and Nigel reconsiders his decision

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The boy didn't end up finishing his burger. The portion being too massive for his small body to even stomach, but he did try one of the soggy fries out of politeness, hiding the taste of old fryer grease with the addictingly sweet condiment Phyllis never lets him have. All things considered, the meal utterly common, especially when compared to the things served in his own house. Yet there was something special about it, a magic that can only be attributed by the company instead of its cuisine.

It was utterly liberating to be with someone as unjudgmental as Nigel. Instead of chastising him for his unfinished meal, Nigel just silently pulled the plate towards him and began polishing off his leftovers. The gesture touched Will to his core, reminding him of the easy symbiosis between the flowers and the bees. It made him feel connected, refreshed in an oasis of silent grunts and adoring eyes that watered his utterly barren social life.

Will never wanted this to end, and before long he found himself fumbling for something to talk about, anything really to extend the time they have together.

"So you said you used to be a jock?" Will asked politely, remembering his hard taught manners to engage in conversation. His father used to scoff at his silence during dinner time, muttering about Will's gloominess and how it must come from his good for nothing mother.

The rejection stung even until today, but Will took it all in stride. Eager to please his father, he repeatedly seek out Phyllis to practice his basic social skills. The housekeeper indulged him, happy to have a hand in the boy's personally growth. Unfortunately before he could show off

how well he can hold up a conversation, his father's workload increased and they no longer shared meals together. Will remembered being disappointed while clinging onto a faint glimmer of hope that one day his father would praise him for his effort.

Still, when Nigel's eyes widened in surprise and softened with nostalgia, Will was immediately forgot about his father's disappointment. He glad for all of those awkward kitchen exchanges and fumbling dialogues, for it allowed him to pull out genuine emotions from the tightly guarded man.

Nigel seemed too intimidating of a figure for anyone to want to get close to. He must be lonely the same way Will was in his seclusion. He understood that well, and he wanted to make him feel special, even if it was only through his simple and limited efforts. "Would you tell me about it?" Will insisted, putting his tea away so he could devote his entire attention to the flushing man.

"Yeah." Nigel sipped his coffee and took and paused to to settle his racing heart, chiding himself for getting so excited over the boy's attention. "I wrestled in high school and college. Was good at it too. You're looking at an NCAA champ over here." He grinned, easily opening up to the boy in ways that he couldn't with others.

"Oh... That's why you're so good at fighting." Will hummed, his mind taking him back to the alley where the man savaged Tony right into the ground.

"I was a pretty bad kid growing up, and sports was the only reason I even showed up in class. My grades were atrocious." The man continued, chuckling as he remembered his exasperated teachers and exhausted parents. "I bet you're a good student, lugging all those heavy books in your bag." Nigel said, looking down at the boy with something akin to pride.

The stare made Will fluster and warm. Most of the compliments he got were usually a form of subtle insults, downplaying his achievement before adding a 'but' before his shortcomings were eventually brought up. To have this impressive specimen of a man praise him was better than anything Will could ever imagined. It was admiration. It was acceptance. It was the soothing of an ache he didn't knew he had.

"Well even if you were a bad student you didn't grow up to be a bad guy." The boy added gently, feeling the need to return the compliment and make Nigel feel as good as he was making

him. "I know plenty of kids in my school who are good students, but I'm pretty sure they're going to grow up to be horrible human beings."

The subtle mention of his bullies, made Nigel eyes darken into something dangerous, but he refrained on saying anything lest he'll break the pleasant atmosphere that they've worked so hard on building. He didn't want to remind the boy of his shitty life. He deserved better than that, and Nigel wanted to be the one to change that.

Still, his anger hung heavily in the air and soured the mood. "Those fucking shitheads." He hissed, already intensely attached to the boy and his problems. He's been in situations like this before, where he inadvertently take on someone else's burden and make it his own. Logically Nigel knew that bonding with the boy was the worst thing he could do. The potent mixture of his desires and overprotectiveness was not something he could control, and he didn't want to derail Will away from his bright future like he did with Gabi.

But how could Nigel not care when he's sitting right in front of him begging for understanding? The boy tried his best in everything, whether in school or when he's standing up against his bullies. He's trying hard right now, pushing past his discomfort to give Nigel the experience of simple human companionship, and he's doing it right after he was just kidnapped and almost raped.

*'You're something special kid.'* Nigel thought. He wanted to say it to him out loud, sensing just how badly the boy needed a kind word to help him on his path. *'You're amazing. I wish you were mine.'*

Before he had the time to process his insane thoughts and be horrified by them, Will leaned in closer and interrupted them completely.

"My Daddy said that if you did something for someone that means they owe you a favor." Will said quietly. Nigel grunted at the mention of his obviously lousy father but nodded anyways, focusing on his anger so he didn't have to deal with his own confusing desires. "I helped back then, didn't I?" The boy said, harkening back to their daring escape. "Does that mean you owe me a favor?"

His question drew a laughter out from Nigel lips, who was both stunned and amused by the relentless little boy. Will, however, was not amused, thinking that Nigel was making fun of his with his laugh. "Not just a favor kiddo. I owe you my life." The man said gently, raising his

hand to rub the frown away from Will's lips. Such a pretty face should only ever be smiling. God, if only Nigel had met him when he's younger. He would've dedicated all of his waking hours just to keep them boy smiling.

The subtle touch and Nigel's wistful gaze made Will shiver, not at all afraid of this man with cuts on his face and blood underneath his fingernails. He wanted to beckon him closer, hungry for the simple affection that only he can give. It didn't matter if felt like charity or pity, Will needed someone to understand, and Nigel was the only one willing to even come close to him.

Which was why when he turned him away it felt like a punch straight in his guts.

"I still don't think it's a good idea." Nigel murmured, feeling as defeated as Will was by his own admission. The words left a bitter taste on his mouth, and Nigel made himself look away just so that he didn't have see the adoration morph into anger and resentment.

He expected tears, or even a well earned punch to the face, but much to his surprise, Will did none of that. He reached out, tentative yet firm, holding the man's tightly clenched wrist to bring his attention back to him. They were

"You still won't help me?" Will squeezed his hand, still warm from holding the mug while his eyes reflected a chilling sense of desperation and need. His slender legs were folded underneath his body like a suppliant begging for his life. In a way he truly was, because Will knew that if he didn't do something about Matthew and Francis, he would up dead before the school year was up.

"I need you Nigel." Will said, his voice so terribly sweet and earnest without an ounce of deceit. Nigel instantly lost his hard won resolve, for how could ignore the pleas of this beautiful boy? The man was stunned by his beauty and anguish, completely captivated by his relentless spirit. It was at that moment Nigel knew that he won't be able to refuse anything from him, for his whole world just shifted, placing the boy at the center of his new axis.

Before he knew it, Nigel was already nodding his head, taking his payment in the form of a touch, battered fist blooming open to cradle Will's small hands. *'A symbiosis,'* he thought. *'I'll give him safety and so he can give me purpose.'*

It was unreasonable and insane, but to a man who has been spent years wandering aimlessly, it was like finding a new religion.

“Alright kiddo, I’ll help you.” He said against his better judgement, letting himself sink deeper into the magical haze that the boy brought around with him. As if he just remembered something, Nigel added gruffly. “But I’ll still be taking that ten grand you promised. It’ll be a job, not charity. Got that?” He said, retreating back to the safety of his bad man persona.

Undeterred by Nigel’s sudden change of tone, Will quickly and gripped his hand even tighter. “I promise I’ll pay you.” He said it so solemnly that Nigel couldn’t even fake grumble to push him away.

He was far too captivated by the fire inside of this genuine boy, enthralled by his flame that he almost didn’t notice the itch for his next hit. When the giddy boy pulled away to reach for his money, Nigel instantly felt cold, just like he gets when too many days has passed since his last fix.

It was as if he’s already addicted to this boy.

*‘He’s a fucking kid. Calm yourself down you useless shit.’* Nigel quietly berated himself, but when he wanted to reach for the envelope, his hand found Will’s instead.

“I’ll protect you.” He said, a silent oath made in complete solemnity. Will lips trembled and he looked like he was going to burst out into tears, but instead he clambered over the table, knocking aside the empty plate and cups so he could wrap his small arms around his new guardian.

“Thank you.” The boy whispered, already soaking Nigel’s shirt with his tears. The man huffed and smiled, only allowing himself to hug the boy back with one arm. To use two would be disastrous. He simply wouldn’t be able to let go.

“Excuse me sir!” The waitress called with his shrill voice. “Please get your son off the table!”

Will flinched and turned to pull away, but Nigel held him firm and still. “Ignore her darling.” He whispered, hoarse and deep against his ears. “Don’t ever let go.”

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After apologizing to the waitress and leaving a large tip from his thick stack of money, Nigel walked out of the dinner fighting a silly grin off his face. He wondered if this was what baptism feels like, a renewal of vows for one to dedicate their lives to god.

If so then his little diety followed him closely behind, shivering from the cold as he self-consciously rubbed his eyes free of tears. It was late at, and the muggy heat has cooled enough to carry the chill of a passing wind. The man instinctively went down to one knee and pulled his jacket back around Will’s body, zipping it close until the boy looked like an scarecrow drowning in its clothes.

“I’ll walk you home.” The man said zealously, leaving no room for argument.

“You don’t have to.” Will argued anyways, his ruddy cheeks draining of color at the mention of home. Somehow the thought of facing his father was more terrifying than going up against Tony and his goons. Somehow his refusal incensed the man.

“Fuck that. You hire me to be your bodyguard. I’m not letting you walk home at night.” The man growled, grabbing the boy’s hand to hold in his own. “I fucking swear. You have no sense of preservation whatsoever. You just got kidnapped motherfucker. Let me take care of you.”

As always, his words came out rougher than he would’ve wanted, but seeing the boy giggle himself pink was enough to make Nigel’s heart sing. Together they walked just like that, hand in hand along the empty streets, and innocuous as a pair of brothers out on a nightly jaunt.

*‘Maybe I can be just that. A brother figure.’* Nigel mused on quietly, still trying to redeem himself from the possessive thoughts he knew was too dangerous to be directed at the boy. Will certainly look like he needed it. A lonely boy who wandered aimlessly through a seedy bar

certainly needed company and guidance. *'Yeah, that'll work.'* Nigel thought, relieved and disappointed in equal measure by his decision.

Though he wanted more than anything to possess the boy, Nigel knew that Will's safety and happiness takes precedence over everything else. It will be impossible for him to do that caged within Nigel's possessiveness. So he will pull back, reign his detestable desires so the boy can flourish without too much of his involvement. *'It's for the best.'* He said, but the chaos inside his veins wanted more. It won't be satisfied until it had Will in its suffocating arms.

"You're not having second thoughts, right?" The boy asked, tugging Nigel's attention back to his. The glow of the orange streetlight fell to reveal a sliver of his face, but it was enough to show his burrowed brows and worried frown.

"Hell no." Nigel quickly replied, eager to brush away his anxieties. "Once I sign on the dotted line, I never pull out from a fight."

"I'm not asking you to fight." Will giggled in relief, stumbling over his own feet and bumping into Nigel's side. "I just need you to protect me. I don't want anyone to get hurt." He stopped looking towards the large school building in the distance. Somehow in the dark it was less ominous than it was in the daylight. At least now he knew that there's no monster there inside.

Nigel's eyes followed Will's worried gaze, already sensing his hesitance to return to school. "Don't worry." He said, pulling the boy close so he could place protective hand over his shoulders. "That shit will stop. I'll sit in your classes if that's what you need."

"What- No!" The boy instantly balked at the idea, head already filled with new rumors that would spread at Nigel's arrival. "I just need you to walk me to and from school. And lunch. They usually get me at lunchtimes."

"Then I'll fucking sit with you at the cafeteria then--"

Will laughed and shook his head, amazed by the man's persistence. "It's okay. Maybe we can..." the boy hesitated. "We're allowed to go off campus for food. I can bring my lunch and we can sit somewhere?" He offered, already thinking that he could ask Phyliss to pack an extra meal just

for the man. That's what employers do, right? Make sure their employees are fed and satisfied? God forbid Nigel couldn't protect him because of his rumbling stomach.

"Sure darling. Anything you need." Nigel said, letting the little endearment slip out just to see Will's cheeks pinken once more. He could never get enough of that. Will smiled shyly back at the man, already feeling so safe with the man standing guard. He wished he could employ him full time. That way he would never have to worry about getting jumped. Maybe if Nigel's there, his father would think twice about saying something mean to him.

As they walked in companionable silence, Will ruminated quietly on the terms of Nigel's employment. It's wishful thinking to wish for his constant company. His father may be on the Forbes's list, but he certainly wasn't the type to coddle and spoil the boy with his hard earned money. Will has plenty of allowance, but it certainly wouldn't be enough to sustain Nigel's wages until his graduation.

"I know ten thousand dollars won't be enough for all six years of high school, but I can get more. I still have my monthly allowances, or I take a part time job-"

"Don't worry about the money. We'll talk about it when we need to talk about it." Nigel said, feeling an odd sense of melancholy as he envisioned the end to their arrangement. He's already dreading the moment he'll to leave the boy at home. There's this animal need for him to tuck Will in his bed and watch him sleep. There's an even more fervent desire to be there when he wakes up, to be the first person he sees and the last.

How the hell can be this attached already?

*'I'm fucked.'* Nigel sighed, rubbing his eyes as if it could clear the haze that permeated his mind. This was different compared to Gabi. Before he saw her and knew that he wanted to marry her. He didn't need to fight his physical attraction, and it grew and grew until it consumed them both.

Now the boy had Nigel questioning his every thought. He wanted to be good to him, but more importantly he wanted to be good *for* the boy as well. Nigel would rather kill himself than let the boy go down the drain like he did with Gabi. Will was destined for good things, and for once Nigel wanted to nurture this beautiful bloom instead of plucking it away at its peak.

It's a foreign emotion for him, this constant vigilance against his own self, and Nigel just hoped that his common sense would win out over the irrational desires for the boy.

They continued walking until the identical suburban houses grew more ostentatious and its green space looked more like forests than garden. White picket fences were replaced by massive hedges and wrought iron fences, a clear indication of the owner's preference not to engage in the tiresome routine of neighborly cheer.

As they walked, Nigel could feel the boy tilting here and there. The soles of his scuffed shoes were dragging against the concrete, and once in a while he would raise his fist to rub the creeping slumber away from his eyes.

"Tired?" He asked, almost whispering so that he wouldn't startle the boy. Will could only answered with a nonchalant mumble, his words slurring in an unrecognizable mutter. He was too adorable really. "Want a lift?" He asked nodding towards his back.

Will stopped and pulled his hand from Nigel's grip to cross at his chest. "I'm not a baby." He defiantly said, before stifling a yawn just a few seconds later. The man smirked.

"I didn't call you a baby. I asked if you want me to carry you." Nigel bristled, though his words didn't carry the sharp edge that it usually does.

"Like a baby." Will clarified, still obviously opposed to the idea.

"God, you're a stubborn little shit." Nigel growled, lifting the small boy by the scruff of his shirt and hike him up against his back. Will yelped and wrapped his arms around Nigel's neck to steady himself, and as he did the man already locking his arms behind his leg. "Where to?" The man asked, smug with a shit eating grin plastered on his handsome face while he bounced Will playfully against his back.

Knowing that that arguing with someone like Nigel would only lead to nowhere, Will scowled and tightened his arms to choke him as payback. The man didn't even stutter, effortlessly holding him up like he weighed nothing even after the ordeal they just went through. "Dragon's Bluff." Will sighed, already knowing when he's defeated.

“Damn. You *are* a little Richie Rich.” Nigel whistled. Everybody in the area knows about the famous gated community. It’s one of the few where even A list celebrities couldn’t get into.

Unhappy at the mention of his wealth, Will rolled his eyes and huffed. “Wake me up when we get to the entrance.” He said curtly.

“Tell me your house number dumbass. I can walk you to the door.”

“They won’t let you in.” The boy mumbled, the warmth of Nigel’s body and scent making him even more sleepy with every steps.

Nigel scoffed. “Yeah. Guess they won’t let a random thug me like me in, huh?”

But Will was already asleep, softly snoring against his neck and sending shivers down Nigel’s body. The man smiled, walking on feeling as light as a feather.

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True to Will’s words, when Nigel approached the security gate of the exclusive community, he was immediately stared down by the group of guards who looked like hounds ready to pounce. “We’re here.” He reluctantly whispered, jolting the previously sleeping boy awake.

He slowly helped Will off his back and steadied his swaying body. “You sure you don’t want me to walk you in?” Nigel asked again, already feeling the telltale jitters of their separation.

Will just gave a him an exasperated look that was too cute for him not to laugh. “Alright.” He finally relented, stepping forward to unzip his jacket. He didn’t need it back. He just want a little bit more time with the boy.

Small hands stopped his before all of its teeth could be unclenched. “Can I have it? Just for today?” Will asked, feeling uncharacteristically brazen over a simple leather jacket. “It’s a bit chilly today.”

“Yeah. Keep it. It’s yours.” Nigel quickly agreed, zipping it back up and resisting the urge to caress the boy’s smiling cheeks. *‘Ask me for anything and it’s yours. God, if only you knew.’*

“Thank you. I’ll see you Monday morning?”

“I’ll be here at dawn.” Nigel said eagerly, drawing out a sweet laugh that made him want to pull the boy right back into his embrace.

“Eight is fine.” Will chuckled, already walking towards the gate, standing bright in the night like a lighthouse amongst a misty sea.

The gate swung open as he approached, and a familiar guard came out dressed in a smattering brown and khaki. “Hi Mr. Winston. Just starting your night shift?” Will greeted the brunette, happy to see a familiar face after a long day.

“Hiya Mr. Graham.” The guard replied, all friendly smiles as he eyed Nigel with suspicious eyes.

“Will is fine, you know that.” The boy said and the man gave him a lopsided grin. He’s been working at the Bluff for years and knew Will ever since he was a child. Though his father was arguably the richest man in residence there, the boy was the farthest thing from a snooty little rich brat. Suffice to say that the man liked him, and he was eager to shoo off any offending intruders that might bother the boy.

“Who’s the weird guy?” He nodded towards Nigel. The man’s eyes were still trained onto Will, unnervingly still like the glint of a tiger in the shadows of a forest.

“Oh, that’s my new bodyguard.” Will said, trying his best to be nonchalant. It wouldn’t be strange for him to have a bodyguard, right? He knew plenty of his neighbors who drive out with a full entourage of a small army.

“A bodyguard? You’re not feeling safe around the Bluff?” Winston asked, inmate concerned that boy even need to hire outside help. “What’s wrong? Maybe I could help.”

Will shook his head, though he appreciated the man’s concern for him. “Thank you, but he’s just there to keep me safe in school. I feel plenty safe with you guys at the gate.”

The reassurance instantly made Winston smile, though he immediately schooled his expression lest his boss Max came over and tell him off. “Do you want me to walk in so you’ll feel safer?” He asked, excited for a little stroll away from the confines of his station.

Will laughed and shook his head. What was it with these men and wanting to walk him home? “No, I’ll be okay. Good night Winston.” he said, waving goodbye to the friendly guard. Behind him he could see Nigel’s shrouded figure waving back just as eagerly, though Will sensed a bit of sadness in the gesture, like a dog anxiously waiting for his master’s return.

## Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3

# Eager

## Chapter Summary

Nigel and Will starts their first day

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

In the light of the morning, the rows of mansions on Dragon's Bluff stretched farther than Nigel's bleary eyes can see. They were all extravagantly decorated, with marbles instead of brick and alabaster facades instead of common plaster walls. It was lightyears away from the barren flat where Nigel chose to reside, and standing outside of the heavily guarded compound made it very clear just how different Will's world was from his.

Still, the man remained standing in his spot, undeterred and somewhat challenged by the enormous divide. Nigel was never one to back down, and with ten thousand dollars in his bank account, he intended on being a man worth such extravagance.

Of course not all of his eagerness came from his bankrupt moral leanings or innate good nature. He already spent a few hundred dollars on a new supply of coke, and the guilt was as powerful of a motivator as any.

Nigel rationalized it by saying that he needed the hit. After all, he would make a lousy bodyguard shivering and twitching from withdrawal. He held no illusion on the devastating effect of his expensive habit, but Nigel didn't plan on escalating. He'll just dip in once a while to hold the itch at bay, to make him a less grumpy person so he could greet Will with a smile.

So he took his modest line with a strong cup of coffee, choosing white gold over sugar to sweeten his morning. It felt much more healthy doing it like that, like Nigel was a functional addict instead of shit for brains thug who couldn't control his cravings. That's what those fancy Wallstreet bankers and famous writers do, right? Slam coke to get their shit done? Nigel could pretend to be like them, a respectable man with a respectable life taking a brief reprieve to do his respectable job.

Standing outside of the gate, the guards shot him a look that clearly state their distaste for him. Immediately the illusion was shattered, but Nigel kept his head up. He will not bow down to a bunch of guard dogs snarling from behind their cage. He's here for Will, and Nigel will not give up with his tail tucked between his legs.

Once the guards realized that he was no threat, they largely ignored them and went back to their duties. Watching the cameras, pouring out cold stale coffee, anything than watching the defiant man glare back at them.

One guard did not join in their distractions. As his colleagues chattered amicably around him, the man brushed back his tawny brown hair and fitted a navy army cap that matches his uniform.

"This area is not open to the public." Winston declared; arms crossed with a stance tailor made to intimidate loiters away. Nigel rolled his eyes and stepped up to face up, so close he could smell the bitter ground of cheap coffee in his breath.

"I'm not trying to get in. Just waiting for someone." The man said, lighting his cigarettes and exhaling a billowing curtain of smoke right in his face.

Winston snuffed but remained unmoved. Nigel could see the fatigue of last night shift already clawing on the corner of his eyes, but even as the rest of his compatriot moved to end their shift, the guard kept his steadfast watch.

Nigel wanted to scoff. What kind of fucking security guard takes his job that seriously? It was admirable in a way, and it made him glad to know that Will lived in such a secure area, but at the same time, he wanted nothing more than to punch this man who's standing between him and his boy.

Eventually Nigel decided that it would be a bad idea to start a brawl on his first day of work, so he raised his hand in mock surrender and parked himself on a bus bench across the street. Winston watched him closely, huffing in satisfaction when he realized that the man won't be approaching the gate. Even so his eyes remained trained on Nigel, ignoring his superior as they shoo him off to end his shift.

Nigel gave him a mocking smile and flipped him off.

More than rich assholes and their entitlement, Nigel hated the people who worked for them that has this higher than thou attitudes. Just because they're working for some rich assholes doesn't give them a higher status, yet there were still people who walked around thinking they're better than everybody.

"Fucking security guard." Nigel grumbled, the irony of the complaint not lost on him.

Like everything in the area, the park bench he occupied was looked maintained and clean, which Nigel found hilarious. In the shittier parts of the city the seats would be missing and any decent bus stop would have a few homeless panhandler taking shelter from the sun. In comparison, this bus stop right outside of Dragon's Bluff looked practically brand new.

It's a wasted investment really. It's not like the inhabitants of the gated community would ever be caught dead taking public transportation.

Just to confirm his thoughts at seven o'clock on the dot, the morning shift of guards began rushing out to open the gates. A fleet of family friendly luxury cars began to pour out, filled with WASP types mothers and their respective chauffeurs off to drop their kids to school before they move on to a brunch in some overpriced country clubs.

Nigel detested those well off suburban types, and they in turn hate him with equal measure. Their sharp eyes pierced through the tinted glass of their car, eyeing Nigel with equal part curiosity and disdain. To them, seeing someone like Nigel in their neighborhood was akin to finding a raccoon in their bin, a mere pest scrounging for refuse while making a mess of their manicured lawn.

On other their derision alone would be enough to rankle his temper, but today he was filled with a strange sort of giddy nerves. It's not unlike one he gets before a fight, instead of an energizing zip that stoked the chaos in his blood alive, it smoldered lazy and slow like the spreading warmth of a good liquor, and all of that was because of Will.

He couldn't get the boy out of his mind. It's probably just a byproduct of the lingering dopamine offsetting the event of their traumatic capture, but Nigel found himself smiling every time Will entered his mind. The boy was so brave back then, yet he was still capable of such gentle

sensitivity. His eyes pierced him, determined and ablaze, and Nigel wanted to bask in its warmth forever.

As young as he was, the boy made him feel seen. He treated Nigel like he was someone of worth even as he caught him in his lowest moment, and his acceptance alone was the breeze Nigel needed to steer away from his self-destructive path. Why drown himself in booze and drugs where he could walk a path of purpose and light? The boy was there, calling for him, *demanding* for Nigel to follow, and for an animal as aimless as he was, Nigel had no reason to refuse.

There was a time where Nigel could have money, fame, and glory, but eh threw it away the moment he chose love over purpose. Since then, everybody had given up on him, and to have a beautifully brilliant boy look to him with hopeful expectation was the reprieve Nigel never thought he needed.

At that moment of spiritual high, Nigel didn't care about the disgusting thoughts he had and how bad he would be for Will. He wanted to be with the boy, to love him in the most unselfish way he could muster and bear down on his darker calling. If Will was older then maybe Nigel would just fuck him to satisfy his animal instinct, but the boy was still so young, so full of promise and unfulfilled potential. Putting a hand in helping him realize them just seem so beautiful.

If Nigel couldn't achieve glory in his lifetime, then he would dedicate the rest of his life protective something worthy of such glory.

As the sun rose higher and the rush of morning traffic began to heighten, Will's small figure appeared from behind the bend of a monstrous McMansion. He still had his leather bag with him, scratched over from the touse with Tony while still managing to remain maddeningly tasteful. Nigel supposed that's what quality goods provide you, remaining steadfast while others would simply unravel at the first sign of adversity.

Nigel wouldn't know about anything of that sort. He always bought the cheapest shit so he could spend the rest of his money on drugs and smokes.

Still, when the boy caught sight of him, he sped up his pace like he was chasing after some glimmer of treasure he's been looking all his life. Nigel immediately stood up, throwing away his newly lit cigarette and jumped right into traffic.

Cars swerved and honked at him, their windows rolling down to reveal their horrified drivers, but Nigel paid them no mind. He ran to the gate as fast as he could, coming to a stop with his face pressed between the bars, and Will arrived at the same moment, cheeks flushed from the little run.

“Hi.” The boy greeted, all breathless and pink. It might just be the coke, but Nigel felt his heart thundering against his ribcage.

“Morning Darling.” Nigel purred, trying to play it cool as his hands curled up against the railings.

“Step away from the gate!” Winston barked, reaching to his utility belt in a show of intimidation. Nigel didn’t care. He pried the side door open and held it aloft for Will to step through. Images of knights guarding moats and castles spread through his mind, and Nigel was once again filled with a sense of childlike giddiness.

“It’s okay Winston.” Will said, giving the tired guard a reassuring smile. “He’s here for me.” And what a wonderful thing it was to be claimed like that, to belong to someone even in the infinitesimal manner of temporary employment.

“Yeah Winston.” Nigel added smugly, his mind going blank at how fucking good and clean the boy smell as he walked passed him. *‘God. He even buttoned his shirt all the way up.’*

Though he still seemed unhappy with the response, Winston stepped back muttered a quiet “Of course sir.” Another obedient watch dog under Will’s employ, but Nigel was the one that was chosen.

Smug with the taste of victory, Nigel lit up a new stick of cigarette and languidly leaned against the railing. “See? The boy likes me.” *‘better than you.’* The last words remained unsaid, but both men understood it anyways. Winston grimaced in disgust, sensing something that was the farthest thing from innocent behind his words. He like Will, sure, but his affection was limited to the proper way an adult should favor a child.

Nigel didn’t look like someone who was overly concerned about the proper way of going about things.

A flicker of ash fell onto his shiny shoes and Winston felt like he wanted to growl and maul the man for his repeated disrespect. Nigel chuckled, clearly amused that he managed to rile him up. If he wasn't in his uniform Winston wouldn't think twice about punching the man and teaching him a lesson, but once he looked up to Nigel he realized just what a terrible decision it would be.

Nigel wasn't just some punk who would scurry after antagonizing someone to their face. His eyes blazed with predatory hunger. *'Come fight me.'* They said with the confidence of a trueborn killer. *'Come fight me so I can show my boy how strong I am.'*

Winston may have his pride as a man, but he was also a rational adult. Landing that first punch might feel good, but he wasn't sure he would survive the rest of the fight.

"Nigel!" Will called from a distance. "Let's go, we're going to be late."

"Coming." He answered eagerly, all traces of danger and aggression melting at he hurried over to the boy. He looked back and shot the unhappy guard with a playful wink.

Winston just stared after the pair with a sigh. Maybe he should just go home. It's been a long night and he's too exhausted to deal with Nigel's petty power play.

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The walked and enjoyed the fair weather that the trail end of August provided. It was early enough that the scorching sun of Texas hasn't shown its flare, and the air was devoid of the pollen and wildflower that sprouted up in spring. It was a nice pleasant walk, and though Nigel knew that as a bodyguard he should be alert and on the lookout for potential dangers, he couldn't help but inch closer so he could get a good scent of his new happy charge.

The boy looked beautiful as always. His hair was shiny and bouncy, tempting Nigel to card his fingers into to try and tame it under his hands. His skin was flushed and clear with youthful vibrancy, holding none of the creases that a worried frown might pulled.

Without the shadows of fear clawing at the edges of his face, Will looked so much younger than the boy he saw at the bare. Not carefree, per se, Nigel doubted that he was the happy go lucky type anyways, but there was a distinct innocence to him that was just too intoxicating for Nigel to ignore.

“You look-“ *‘Beautiful. Gorgeous. So goddamn fucking ravishing’* “-good today, kid.” Nigel said, struggling to find the appropriate words to use.

Will blinked and turned, walking backwards so they would keep their pace and still make it to school in time. “I slept really well last night. I usually have trouble sleeping on a school night, but today I just feel...” he shrugged, hiking up his heavy book bag. “Safe.”

A small sound threatened to choke Nigel up from the inside. He swallowed it down, hating to appear sentimental and weak on the first day. “Well good.” he said, though his words still came out shaky and warbled at the end. “You *are* safe Will. You have me now.”

The boy ducked down and turned back around, hiding the smile he couldn’t keep off his face. Nigel still caught a glimpse of it, and it made him feel so good and accomplished. God, was it really that easy? Just a few confident words and he gave back the boy’s peace of mind. *‘Goddamn, I’m fucking great at this.’*

He trailed after boy and tried his best to play off his energetic jitter in silence. Still, he noticed the boy’s rolled up khaki shorts, fitting perfectly to frame his slender legs. His short oxford shirt hugged his sides, the tail ridding up underneath his bag and giving him a small glimpse of bare skin. Well groomed, neat, and clean, Will was the very definition of a preppy little rich boy. It wasn’t an aesthetic Nigel enjoyed, but it looked so damn good on him he could just eat the boy up.

When he realized the dangerous trajectory of his thought Nigel quickly shook his head and let out a nondescript little mutter. He shouldn’t have done that line. Coke always get him so horned up. He can’t be perving over a kid.

*‘A brother Nigel. Big brother. No fucking gross shit. You’re gonna catch a fucking case you idiot.’*

Will noticed the man's frantic jolting and a particular smack against his own cheeks. "You're really... excited today." He said, hiding his chuckle over the man's antics. He thought Nigel would be the quiet, brooding type, but this over eager man was a far cry from the intimidating monster he met at the bar.

"My first day at a new job. Gotta come with the right attitude, you know?" Nigel laughed as he nervously bit on the filter of his cigarettes.

Will eyes him suspiciously but accepted the explanation without further comment. "Oh, I almost forgot." He said, scrambling behind himself to pull out Nigel's jacket. He open it up with a flourish, showing off the newly cleaned jacket while looking up to Nigel with expectant eyes. The old ratty thing was neatly folded and looking shiner than the day Nigel bought it.

"I asked Phillis for some leather oil and she helped me cleaned it up. I even sewed up a patch for the inseam, see?" He said, flipping the thing around to show the little patch of black fabric to hold onto the lining Nigel ripped in his fight.

It wasn't gratitude, but something equaling warm and disarming welled up inside of him. It's been a long time since anyone cared enough to take care of him like that. He took the jacket from Will's hand, making sure to brush over the boy's fingers.

"Wow kid. You did a really great fucking job." He croaked, giving over the need to tousle those damnable curls and combing it back over before the boy could protest. "You're really something special, aren't you?"

Will beamed a happy smile, cheeks aching over the foreign expression. Nigel noticed his work. Not just that, but he appreciated them too. Will always tries so hard to impress his father in many ways, but the man was just far too distant and busy to pay attention.

Nigel's pleasure and approval were not bad substitutes for his frequently absent father. He felt so close to him already, and Will wanted nothing but to see him smile proudly like this everyday.

“As much as I hate to part from your beautiful work, the jacket is still yours darling.” Nigel draped the thing over the boy’s shoulders, delighted at how small he looked drowning under all of that leather. How could someone make a manly old jacket look so goddamn adorable like this?

Will halted to a stop and furrowed his brows. “I can’t have this.” He complained, awkwardly and pushing the crumpled thing into Nigel’s hands.

“Sure you can. I gave it to you, remember?” Nigel insisted. He wanted Will to have it, so that even if he was apart from him, the boy would still have a part of him near. Still, the boy remained distressed, and Nigel had to tell himself to patient and gentle with this fragile little thing.

“But I can’t go to school like this.” Will complained. He’s not a difficult child at all, but the idea of being the center of attention, and with a jacket like this it *will* draw attention, made the boy practically whiny.

“Oh? My ratty old jacket not good enough for you?” Teased the man, flicking the boy behind his ear with his nicotine stained fingers, yet another stolen touch he relish on showering the boy with.

“It’ll attract attention.”

“As it should. You’re not a mousy little thing darling. You should be noticed.” *‘God, with a face like that you should be on movies and magazines, but that would mean other people would see you, and I fucking hate that so much.’* Nigel wanted to say it all out loud, but even he understood just so inappropriate those words would sound.

“I mean the *wrong* kind of attention.” Will intoned, his voice dropping like it always does when he talked about his bullies.

Within a second the playful air around them turned charged with Nigel’s fury. It was instant, like a switch flicking in the man’s brain. His hands tightened so hard the newly conditioned leather squeaked under his hands. His lackadaisical smile was replaced with a glower trained at an imaginary figure, and Will marveled at how easy it was to turn Nigel back into the monster.

There was no doubt about it. It wasn't just a fierce sense of protectiveness overcoming the man. Will *knew* Nigel would kill for him. He could just point and whisper a name, and Nigel would come back to him with the heads of his enemy like a hound dog eager for a praise.

It made Will feel powerful. He can read into people easily enough, that's how he knew he could trust Nigel in the first place, but he didn't know that Nigel would be willing to kill for him. Suddenly ten thousand dollars seemed like a paltry sum, because Will knew that he was not worth the intense devotion radiating from the man.

"Nigel." Will called softly, stepping close to hold his tightly clenched hands. It was like they were back at the dinner again, the boy's gentle understanding cutting through the murderous rage that clouded over Nigel's mind.

The man blinked and looked at him, slightly dazed over the tender smile the boy had just for him. "It's okay. I'll keep it in my locker. That way no one would make fun of me."

It was such a tender sentiment that it made Nigel's chest ache. The boy would risk ridicule just so he would make him happy. *'You precious little thing. Fuck, I want to make you mine darling. Those fucking kids don't know what they're missing.'*

Nigel hated that a bunch of sniveling brats could strike enough fear they had to negotiate and argue over a fucking jacket. He wished he could walk into his class with him, rub his scent all around Will so those fucking animals could see that Will was *his*.

Instead of exploding into his curse laden rants, Nigel stroked the boy's head, offering comfort instead of violence for once in his life.

"How about this?" Nigel shrugged on his jacket, uncaring that it's August in Texas and would be sweltering hot later on. "I'll keep it warm for you until school's out and you can wear it back home when it gets windy in the evening. What do you think?"

The suggestion was silly. The whole conversation about the jacket was silly, but Will could see just how keen Nigel was on accommodating him. It's strange to see such persistence devotion.

He had Phyllis and other hired help around the house, and they would do what he asked on the sole reason of him being who he was, but they would complete their task with the detached efficiency of a servant.

Nigel doesn't feel like someone he employed. He felt like a friend, a brother, and something else so intimate for Will to even dare name .

As the boy ruminated in silence, the man took the confused look on his face as hesitation. "You paid me as a bodyguard, I think I can handle guarding this old thing, eh?" he added jokingly, straightening the jacket with exaggerated flourish and an extra grin to ease the boy's worries.

"I... I'd like that." Will finally said, glad to be pulled from his busy little mind. "Thank you. It's a very nice jacket. I'm sure I'll grow into them soon." He blushed, a tad bit insecure about how small he was even for his age. "I'll wear them to school as soon as it fit me."

Nigel nodded with a satisfied little harrumph, but secretly he hoped that such a day will never come to them. He liked the idea of the boy being smaller than him. It arouses a dormant sense of protectiveness Nigel didn't knew he had. *'Plus, you fit better in my arms all small like that darling. God, I now I really want to fucking hug you. If I'm good you'll let me hug you, right? I'm such a good fucking hugger.'*

His coke addled mind was a flurry of half erotic fantasies tempered with the foreign desire to do right by the boy. It's a struggle he was unaccustomed to, but it felt good to want something other than drugs, booze, or sex. It was like he was called to a higher purpose, one worthy enough to dedicate his miserable life to.

As they continued walking, the extravagant homes were replaced with more modest ones that one would live in instead of bought up for their real estate value. Soon enough they saw a line of traffic of parents dropping off their kids to school.

They walked through a sea of hurried teenagers in silence. Just steps away from the concrete stairs that would lead him to the school, Will turned around to say something to Nigel. *'I'm scared. Please come with me'* he wanted to say, and Nigel looked eager enough that he would follow him without question.

Eventually Will thought better of it, closing his mouth and looking rather cross at himself for struggling to start a conversation. “*Shut your mouth boy, you look like a used up Dutch wife.*” His father would say, and Will learned to keep his hard to express emotions close to heart.

But Nigel didn’t told him off for his silence or hesistance. The man kneeled down and took his hand in those large paws that has broken so many men.

“You’ll be fine darling. Be brave for me, alright?” Nigel said, eyes bright with a gentle sort of pride. Will flinched, surprised at the unselfish words of encouragement. It’s not what he expected from a man like him, but Will was so hungry for connection that he accepted them without a second thought.

“Okay.” He breathed out, shaky and nervous as he squeezed Nigel’s hands back.

“Atta boy.” The man grinned, brushing a thoughtless kiss over the boy’s hands. It filled Will with an entirely different flutter in his stomach. The man just smiled, happy that he could distract the boy away from his worries.

“If you need me, I’ll be just right across the street, alright? Here’s my phone number.” He said, opening Will’s hand to scribble his digits across his sweaty palms. “Check in every so often yeah? If someone is bothering you then just text me and I’ll bust through the door and kick their ass.”

“Please don’t!” Will exclaimed in a hurry. “You’re supposed to be protecting me, not beating up kids at my school.”

“Same difference sweetheart.” The man grinned, relishing at how easily he could make the boy blush.

“Nigel.” Will said weakly, though he couldn’t stop the smile rising from his lips. It would be silly to call Nigel every time he heard a snarky, but the thought of having him close comforting enough that the idea of school didn’t seem so overwhelming anymore.

Satisfied that he has comforted his boy, the man tousled his hair and combed it back again. "Alright. Go and study or something." Nigel smiled, sending him forward with a clap behind his head. Will took one deep breath and let the momentum carried him forward, borrowing a little bit of bravery from the bravest, strongest man he has ever known.

Nigel crossed the street and watched Will go in. from outside of a coffee shop filled with caffeine addicted high schoolers. He stood behind the massive line, knowing that once the bell rung it would soon dwindle down into nothing.

On the top of the steps Will turned around Will turned around and gave him a small wave, duking in under the crowd before Nigel even had the chance to return it. It was somethings small and innocuous, but it made Nigel feel like he just fell in love.

#### Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3

# Noble Vandalism

## Chapter Summary

Nigel encounter one of Will's tormentors and decided to do something about it.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sitting in the crowded classroom no longer felt treacherous to the young Graham heir. He was still an outsider, ignored except for when he's the target of a jealous remark, but the mutterings about his nice clothes and perfect marks no longer hurt him. These misguided expressions of teenage angst seemed so trifling now, for he had found himself a guardian, his own knight in shining armor whose devotion would rival the vitriol spewed from hateful lips.

Will was more than safe. He was virtually indestructible.

At first, he thought Nigel would go about his task like most adults do, dragging his feet until he could collect the last of his wages and bounce. Much to the boy's surprise Nigel came to him as a friend. He greeted him with a familiarity only found in those who have shared adversity, and though he called him 'kid', 'sweetheart', and 'darling', he never once said it in a demeaning way

That itself was enough to endear the man to him. He would even dared to call Nigel his friend.

Sure, the man remained untested in his duties. Human deficiencies could prevail over his noble intention, and Will would be left feeling disappointed and alone. Nigel was far from a perfect man, and once the boredom of the job set in, he could run off with his money and ditched Will to face his enemies alone.

Yet despite all of these very real facts, Will refused to doubt Nigel like that. The boy wanted to trust Nigel, to mirror his overflowing enthusiasm with equal zeal. More than that, he wanted to believe that in this lonely world, a fragment of friendship and loyalty could still be found, even for someone as antisocial as him.

So Will chose hope instead. He had enough of despair. The boy wanted happiness, and for once he had someone on his side to help him achieve that.

The real threat of Matthew and Francis still loomed in the horizon, but now it seemed like a distant thing, shrouded by illusion of safety Nigel's presence provided. Even if they would slam their way into the classroom and pound him to the ground, Will fully believe that Nigel will come to his rescue. As terrible as Francis and Matthew was, they were no match against a full grown adult.

For the first time since he started school, Will went on his day worrying only about the problems on his books than the ones out in the halls. Not that he could get anything done. The smudged numbers on his palm took much of his attention for the remainder of the class.

As soon as recess rolled around the boy got his phone out with a warm feeling fluttering in his stomach. He never reached for it when he's at school before. The simple act of adding Nigel's number to his meager contact list was exciting, and Will found himself smiling as he wrote him his first text.

**Will (09:08):** Hi, it's Will

**Will (09:08):** Just letting you know that it's me

**Will (09:10):** I meant the number

**Will (09:10):** This is my number

Within the span of minutes Will has plummeted from the highest peak of bliss to the deepest pit of mortification. He searched frantically on how to unsend his embarrassing text messages, trying to maintain a sliver of dignity in front of the man. Nothing came up, but before Will could wallow further in his inherent awkwardness, his phone chimed.

**Nigel (09:23):** Heya darling sorry I just saw your text earlier but I was in line for a danish and the fucking kids swept the good ones before I could get to them goddamn fatties so they gave me something called a unicorn cronut this shit is a sugar bomb with goddamn neon frosting and that shit sparkle so much but I can't tell if it's glitter or grease and I don't support this fucking hipster coffee shop bullshit

**Nigel (09:24):** It tasted good though

**Nigel (09:24):** How's your day going?

The image of a surly Nigel munching on a multi colored croissant made Will inadvertently giggle, erasing any worries he might have about the man's distaste for him.

**Will (09:25):** Ok

**Will (09:25):** I'm doing good

**Will (09:25):** Really good

**Will (09:26):** No one really bothered me today yet

**Nigel (09:26):** Text me even when someone is looking at you funny

**Nigel (09:26):** I'll fuck em up

He really shouldn't laugh. It's bad to wish harm on his classmates, but Will would be lying if the idea didn't make him smile.

**Will (09:28):** Please don't

**Will (09:28):** And please use punctuations

**Will (09:28):** Reading that wall of text really hurts my eyes

**Nigel (09:28):** Anything for you darling :)

**Nigel (09:28):** Are these considered punctuations?

A slew of emoji detailing his morning at the coffee shop filled half of the phone screen. They were loud and colorful, much like the man himself, and Will hovered over the dizzying array of options, trying to find the perfect reply to stop the cartoonish onslaught.

"Having a good day?" A familiar voice pulled Will the screen before he could type out a response.

“Ms. Bloom.” The boy immediately scrambled hid his phone. The kind English teacher smiled down at him, giving no indication that she saw him fretting over his phone. “Ah, yes. I guess you can say that.” The boy chuckled nervously, giving her an approximation of a happy smile.

Alana looked delighted, as if Will’s happiness was infectious enough to make her day. “You have a very nice smile Will. I’m glad that we can finally see it.” She teased easily.

“I *do* smile.” Will automatically snapped, a reflex gained after years of snarky comments and unfair shots. Once he realized that her words held no malice, Will immediately regretted his harsh reply. “Sorry.” He mumbled, dropping his gaze so he didn’t have to meet his eyes.

Thankfully Alana merely laughed and waved off his worries. Years of teaching a public school has made her impervious to the moody snark of her pubescent students. She can tell the difference when a kid was bad and when they’re just lashing out to protect himself. Will certainly fell into the latter category.

In some ways her kindness made her unsuitable as a teacher. Alana cared too much, and it’s simply not viable to know every one of her students and solve their problem for them. There were limits to what a teacher can do, but it didn’t stop her from wanting to be kind to a lonely boy without friends.

“Well good! I was worried that you were having a hard time adjusting to a new environment.” She said patiently. “And you know the rules. No phones during school hours Will.” The woman winked before sauntering off to carry on her way.

Will stared at her retreating figure with a certain kind of awe, her simple act of kindness enough to earn her a special place in his heart. First there’s Nigel, and now Alana Bloom? Is it possible that his life was finally looking up?

‘*Calm down Will. Don’t jinx it.*’ He firmly told himself, but when his phone chimed with yet another text from Nigel, Will couldn’t restrain back his smile. It’s hard not to be happy when your friend regaled you with silly little rants about silly little coffee shops.

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Greasy, sticky pastries and a cocaine habit not gel together well. When Nigel decided to cut himself a modest line in the coffee shop bathroom, he found the butter on his phone screen clung onto remnants his precious powders. "Goddammit." Nigel cursed, wiping off the minute traces with his finger and rubbing it into his gums. He hated wasting drugs, and he'll suffer the strange acridly taste if it meant he could maximize his own high.

He didn't plan on doing a line while he was at work. In fact, Nigel promised himself that he wouldn't do it. Yet no matter how strong he resolved to be, just sitting around doing nothing was just so goddamn boring. Idle hands were the devil's playthings, and though Nigel wasn't one to ascribe moral values to innocuous acts, he certainly felt he was sinning while indulging himself while on the clock.

*'That's it. That's my last one of the day.'* He promised himself even though he knew that it was a lie. He may have money now, but Nigel was in no position to sustain a coke habit. He knew just how extravagant such things could be, and even with the reluctant discounts his dealer often gave, Nigel could soon be left destitute if he didn't control himself.

At the same time, he didn't want to control himself. The man was just so goddamn happy! He got himself a job, saved a beautiful boy, and he got out of his rut of drowning his feelings with drugs and picking himself back up with uppers. If anything was worthy of a celebration then this was it, and a few invigorating lines seemed not only appropriate but necessary to the continuation of his good luck.

After resisting the temptation for another bump, Nigel went back out to the coffee shop in an uncharacteristic good mood. He found himself whistling and greeting the overly chipper waitress who recommended that strange rainbow concoction to him. Everything seemed brighter, the day full of hope, and he was beyond excited to see his charge and employer.

Knowing just how crowded the tables inside would make him, Nigel took a table outside and began smoking to kill some time. It's almost lunchtime now and the promise of seeing Will again made him want to run around and jump in glee. The cocaine might be the culprit of his sudden burst of energy, but there was no denying just how taken Nigel was by the boy already.

Usually relationships were built and strengthened by shared experiences and common interest, but these intense bursts of dopamine made Nigel wonder if one could replace such tedious

introductory phase with a few bumps here and there. Will doesn't deserve to deal with his strange moods and awkward attempts to connect. In Nigel's eyes, he's as important as family, and he wanted to treat him that way.

It wasn't hard not to like Will. The boy was easy on the eyes and his splendid show of bravery hard earned him Nigel's hard-won respect. Most importantly, he filled Nigel's gaping need for connection, and after a good year of self imposed isolation, Nigel reveled in his company like a stallion galloping into the wild.

Though it may sound strange, but Nigel felt like he already knew the boy. He as attached to him as he was to his rapidly depleting eightball, and there's just this need for him to show it all to the world. He wanted to shout it out on the streets, paint his confession with the blood of his enemies, to hold the boy against him and mark him with his scent, his hands, his teeth.

*'I'm his protector, and he's all mine. Mine. Mine.'*

It's unfair to burden someone so young and innocent with his strange brand of possessiveness, but Nigel truly believed that they were meant to find one another. Will made him feel like himself again, giving back parts of his identity that he lost when Gabi left him. How could Nigel not give every last ounce of his devotion to him? To not do that felt too much like treachery.

Nigel knew that he was better when he had someone else in his life. He had no shame in admitting that. Knowing himself truthfully was better than pretending to be someone he's not. The problem lies not in his strange form of attachment, but how... unpredictable he could be in his protectiveness.

When a group of letterman clad teenagers drove in and parked themselves a few tables down, Nigel instantly perked up and listened on closely. It may stemmed from a zealous form of paranoia, but they were the exact type of people who tormented his charge every day and Nigel was itching to punch something to alleviate his boredom.

It's laughably easy to listen in to their conversations and parse out their words. They talked like they owed the place, arrogant and uncaring of other patron's comfort. Not that Nigel minded, though he soon grew tired of the inane subject matters that could only be important to teenagers such as them. He cared very little about other people's problems, and he cared about high school drama even less.

If Will's safety isn't on the line, he would've barked for them to shut the fuck up ages ago. Thankfully Nigel didn't have to suffer too long before they stupidly revealed their intentions.

"God, I'm so pissed off. My girl's on her period and she wouldn't put out."

A slew of jeers and sympathetic hums echoed around the table. "You would fuck her when she's bleeding all over your dick? That's nasty."

"I mean, she could still give me head right?"

"Dude. You're such a shitty boyfriend."

The group erupted in uproarious laughter, but the whiny little turd kept on yapping on. "And don't get me started about Francis. He's a good captain and all, but he's such a tightwad. Why the hell am I doing drills at lunchtime when I'm on the bench half of the time? Fuck, man. This fucking sucks."

"Just find that Graham kid and knock him around a bit. I always feel better when I shove that fucking faggot into the ground."

"Yeah, and you'll get brownie points with Francis too. Who knows, maybe he'll let you off practice once in a while"

"While you're at it, you can even make him suck your cock too. See? Problem solved."

Their words made Nigel seethe, but he quickly quieted his anger. Punching these dirt bags might feel good for a second, but he will be of no use to Will if he's locked up in some county jail. No, he will bide his time and make them hurt in ways that would really matter.

His eyes instantly went to the white truck they rode up in, the vehicle far too shiny and nice for a mere high schooler to afford. He had a small switchblade in his pocket, and he knew just how to use it.

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Though a new sense of confidence now flowed through him, Will wasn't stupid enough to go around courting trouble. He knew his limits. The hostile environment did not end with his classroom alone. In the halls there were more dangers than just sharp words or sneers. He already once passed Matthew and the look he gave Will was enough to make his skin crawl.

Even though he was nervous about the man's leers, Will was no longer ruled by fear. Nigel will protect him, he was certain of it that it might as well be fact, but as much as he enjoyed seeing Nigel fight, provoking either Francis or Matthew would do either of them no good.

Still, it's hard to sit back and play defense when you have an attack dog by your heel.

Shaking off the thought of confrontations and aggressive forms for risk mitigation, Will continued on his lunch routine like he always does. As soon as the bell rang, he ducked out of class and hauled out his heavy bags. He had stopped using his locker all together. Remaining in one place for too long posed a very risk of bodily harm, and Will didn't want to go back to Nigel and give him any reason to act rashly.

Still, the fact that he didn't have to eat his lunch at the toilet near the AV room made him sigh in relief. The place wasn't exactly well maintained, and most days the stench was enough to kill his appetite altogether. Plus, the prospect of eating his lunch in an actual table was enough to make him smile.

As he walked across the courtyard Will could feel himself growing even more self conscious with every step. He knew he promised to meet Nigel at the café, but the place was usually crawling with upperclassmen. Will didn't like the idea of standing out, he kept himself safe by blending into the background, but at the same time he really wanted to see Nigel again.

*'He'll keep me safe. He'll keep me safe.'* He repeated those words like a mantra, childishly clinging onto them as he pulled out his phone to pretend like he's doing something.

"My car!"

The ear piercing wail made Will look up from his screen. The café parking lot was crowded with people, most notably a group of boys in letterman jackets who seemed to be causing most of the noise. Will didn't have to see their face to know that they're Francis's teammates. Those goons always moved in packs like the wild animals they are, but even with that knowledge Will couldn't stop himself from moving close to see the source of commotion.

In front of the circle of jocks was a wrecked white truck. The wheels were slashed open, revealing scratched up rims that no longer held any of it's previous shine. The length of its side was scraped up violently, as if a humongous beast had came by sharpened it's claws against it.

If he saw it on the side of a highway Will would've thought that the car was just in an accident, but in an innocuous parking lot? It was obvious that somebody intentionally wrecked the car.

Unfortunately for will, one of the jocks caught sight of him staring the destroyed car. Distraught looks turned predatory, and one of the boys marched up to him with his fist all clenched up. "Graham!" He called, ready to pick a fight. "What the fuck are you smiling at you little shit? I-"

Before he could come within a foot of the boy, a large figure stepped in and shielded Will completely from sight. The familiar scent of leather and smoke came like rain over a forest fire, and within an instant the anger and aggression aimed towards him fizzled out into fear.

"Finish that sentence." Nigel growled, taking one intimidating step at a time. "Go on. I fucking dare you."

The teen swallowed hard and did nothing, confounded by the experience of facing someone who could hurt him back if he tried. One of his friends came up to him and pulled the petrified boy away, as confused with Nigel's existence as he was.

“Pussies.” Nigel spat at their direction, and the group flinched in unison. When the man turned around, he was all smiles, greeting the boy with a fond tousle in his head. “Money well spent, eh?” He murmured, every inch of his body coming alive with a rush of adrenaline.

“Thank you.” Will smiled weakly and leaned up the touch, already drained from the threat of violence that could’ve spiraled out of control. If Nigel wasn’t there they would’ve probably beaten him up and blamed him for wrecking the car, and with something a serious case of vandalism, the school would see it as just retribution and punished Will instead.

“Can we have lunch now?” The boy asked, smiling in gratitude up at Nigel for his help. The man grinned and nodded, pulling him to his seat he saved with his newly restored leather jacket. Will’s cheeks warmed at the sight, happy that Nigel was taking care of it like he promised, and when the man draped it over his shoulder, Will didn’t even want to complain about being too hot.

It smelled like Nigel, and it felt like a bulwark against everything evil coming his way.

They settled in and just watched each other quietly, both happy and grinning over the small victory they achieved over those tyrannical boys. Nigel wondered just how long they could keep this companionable silence up, his heart beating faster as he took note of the miniscule details of the boy’s beautiful face.

Every good thing must come to an end, and eventually Will broke the pleasant spell they’ve casted over themselves and began pulling out two ceramic containers from his heavy leather bag.

“I asked Phyllis to bring me an extra serving for you.” He said, pushing one of them to Nigel shyly.

“Your maid knows you hired a bodyguard?” The mans laughed, imaging the strange conversation the boy had to endure.

“No way.” Will quickly shook his head. “Daddy wouldn’t approve at all, so I told her I wanted two lunches from now on. Growing boy and all of that.”

“Sneaky.” Nigel laughed, shooting Will a knowing look that made him squirm in his seat. “I never worked anywhere that gave me a free lunch before.” Nigel murmured, opening up the elegant container and hummed his approval. Chicken breast, quinoa, and a medley of vegetable in peanut sauce. Healthy but bland, just the way he used to cook his meals. “Looks great, kid.”

It was so gratifying to see Nigel digging into his food. It’s weird that he’s so invested in the man’s opinion since he wasn’t the one who cooked it, but every hums and nods felt like a praise directed him and him alone. “I’m glad you like it.” He said softly, opening up his own container to eat his lunch. Before he could take a first bite, he noticed a sprinkling of white chips clinging onto Nigel’s knuckles.

Suddenly everything made sense.

“Nigel... Are you the one that keyed up their car?” He asked, forcing his mouth to turn down into a frown when all he wanted to do was grin.

The man shrugged, completely unapologetic as he enjoyed his meal. “I didn’t like how they were talking about you.”

Confusion come over Will’s face, and the news took his appetite completely. “They were talking about me?”

“They called you by name.” Nigel nodded, completely oblivious to Will’s distress. “They were going to beat you up just because they were having a bad day. Said it was going to get them brownie point with Francis.” He snarled at the memory, still angry at how terrible kids could be. Nigel omitted the other things they said. There was no need to cause the boy any more alarm.

Not that it helped, the boy’s mind was already frozen in anticipatory fear. Francis was a fearsome figure, and he shuddered to think of what his team was willing to do to earn some extra praise.

When Nigel looked up, he immediately abandoned his spoon and reached out to hold Will’s hands. “What’s wrong? Why aren’t you eating?”

Will shook his head, too keyed up to explain himself to Nigel. He was angry, not at Nigel himself, but at the idea that they see him as a punching bag to vent their frustrations into.

He understood human flaws, Will see it reflected in his own complicated relationship with his father. Yet no matter how hard he tried to see the best in other people, all he could see was man's detestable qualities reflecting back from his peers.

There's something about the rabid pack mentality of the football team. They constantly vied to appease their leader, even if it meant treating Will as something less than human. For weeks Will had languished in self loathing, wondering just what is it about himself that made other people hate him, but the truth was as simple.

*They* were the problem, not him.

He looked up to see his worried protector, eyes burning bright with so much passion for him. No one else ever looked at him that way and wished for his happiness. No one ever stepped up and risked themselves for him. Slowly his fear began to melt away, leaving him so utterly fearless and brimming with gratitude.

The boy wished he was articulate enough to say what he felt right now, to whisper his gratitude and see Nigel's face lit up in pride. The man deserved to know that he was worthy, that Will see his action and treasured it as much as he treasured him.

But he was just a boy, still stumbling with his own feelings and worries. So he just shook his head and squeezed Nigel's hand back, giving the man a reassuring smile he didn't need to fake.

"You're a bad. Really, really bad." Will smiled as he brushed away the lingering evidence of Nigel's noble vandalism. The man laughed and nodded, letting the boy become complicit in his crime of passion.

"I am, but I promise I'll be good to you."

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As team captain Matthew's presence was required in every one of his team meeting. It's a waste of time really. Swimming was a completely individualistic sport, but he went through the motions anyways, delegating most of the task to his enthusiastic vice captain. While Andrew Sykes droned on and on about schedules and drill, Matthew found his mind wandering to his most favorite subject. Will Graham.

The boy was so utterly captivating. At first Matthew was only interested in ruining Francis's day. It's so amusing to see that lumbering gorilla fume and grunt in confusion at the loss of his prey. When Matthew saw just how beautiful the boy was and he decided to play with him a little bit, pushing him bit by bit in a different kind of hunt.

The more Will struggled and fight back the boy obsessed Matthew became. He was content on being alone, indulging in simple hookups with no emotional value, but meeting Will made Matthew wanted more. There was a fire inside the boy, buried under a timid exterior of a goody little boy.

He wanted to break him and see if the beast inside matched with the one he kept hidden his life.

School without Will was so utterly boring. Grades come to him easily, so did friends and athletic achievements. Only Will provided him with the battle he craved, and once he conquered the boy, victory would taste so very sweet.

But for now his own beast remained at rest, bored out of his mind as he listened on the lunchtime meetings his coaches insisted they have. Sharing meals and tips was supposed to encourage team bonding, but all it manage dto do was proved to him just how stupid the rest of his team was.

His wandering eyes cuts across the courtyard and to the café just across the street. Hawk like eyes zeroed in on a familiar figure, draped in an oversized leather jacket and talking to a man with a bright smile on his face.

Will never have that expression when he's talking to him.

Seething in jealousy and called to recklessness, Matthew nudged Andrew who was distracted from the meeting and was laughing at the football's team's misery. "Hey. Who's that guy sitting with Graham?"

Andrew squints his eyes to try and see what Matthew was talking about. When he found the sight Matthew was talking about, he groaned and shook his head in disbelief. He respect Matthew for bringing them to championship last year, but his obsession with Will Graham was getting ridiculous.

"Dunno. His brother I guess." Andrew said nonchalantly, frowning when his answer didn't pull his captain's attention away.

"Brothers don't act like that." Muttered Matthew, who abandoned his lunch altogether to stare at the two talking figure. Andrew rolled his eyes and punched him lightly on the arm.

"Come on Brown. Focus. This was supposed to be a team meeting."

Matthew rolled his eyes at Andrew's holier than thou attitude. "We're a swim team. You either make your time or you get cut. The fuck is there to talk about?" He snapped. In an instant his words made everyone sit up straighter, every one of them afraid of sitting out in the bench when competition comes.

Andrew wished he could have Matthew's charisma. He would be a good leader, or at least he wont leave in the middle of the meeting like Matthew just did.

## Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3



# Absence

## Chapter Summary

Nigel and Matthew confront each other, and as the semester rolled in new surprises turned Will's life completely upside down.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Despite knowing Matthew was only a few years older than he was, Will saw him as a villainous entity bigger much bigger the teenage body he inhabited. He certainly walked like one, swaggering with the confidence of one that knows his worth, an oddity amongst his adolescent peers. Even from a distance Will could make out his approaching figure, and through an instinctive mechanism ingrained in his body, the boy stiffened and hunched down so he wouldn't be noticed.

Not that his little wiggling did any good. Matthew's hawk like gaze was securely trained onto him, and Will began to feel the telltale signs of petrifying dread.

"What's wrong?" Nigel asked, frowning at Will's change in demeanor.

"That's him." Will mumbled to the ground, too afraid to look up. "That's Matthew Brown."

Nigel immediately stood up and turned around, zeroing on the only person not rushing away to beat the lunch bell. Will quickly packed up his things and tried to join the crowd, but Nigel's large hands pushed him right back down.

"Stay. You don't need to run away anymore." Nigel growled, already rearing up for a fight.

Though Will knew that he could count on Nigel to protect him, his words didn't inspire the peace it used to bring. He knew just how twisted Matthew was, smart and manipulative with all

the charms and connings of a psychopath. Will could just imagine him baiting Nigel just to get the man arrested.

So the boy latched onto Nigel's hand and pulled him back. "Please no." He begged. For a fraction of a second Matthew's face twitched, clearly unhappy with their closeness, but the easy smile remained there on his face.

Nigel was not as composed. He pushed Will back again, this time just a little bit too roughly, sending him tumbling back against the chair with an audible thump.

"Whoa there." Matthew said in alarm, though he wasn't really worried about Will. Just disliked how a stranger was putting his hand on his property. None of it showed of course. Matthew was chuckling as he jogged over to Will, but there was something dangerous glinting in his cold dead eyes. Before he could reach over to help Will up, Nigel stepped right in front of him and blocked his path

Matthew blinked, standing face to face with the dangerous man with a lackadaisical smile plastered across his face. "You shouldn't shove little boys around like that mister." He said mockingly. "You okay pretty bird?" Matthew asked, ignoring Nigel altogether as his eyes scanned over his prey's body.

The nickname sent shivers down the back of Will's neck. How could he just pretend like everything was fine with them? Just last week Matthew all but dry humped him on an empty stairwell, and now he's just walking up to him like nothing happened?

Nigel looked confused, but thankfully the man didn't budge from his spot. "Keep walking." He said, low and menacing, and Matthew immediately threw up his hands in mock surrender.

"Alright, alright. I'm was just gonna get some coffee. Geez." He shimmied around Nigel's large figure and walked right into the shop, greeting the baristas who all welcomed him by his name.

The sheer blindness of everyone there made Will feel so sick.

“I have to go.” The boys said, grabbing his bag and his half eaten lunch so he could get as far away from Matthew as possible. Nigel was having none of that. He kept his hand on the boy’s shoulder’s anchoring him to the chair he was eager to leap out of. His focus was no longer on Will. His deep red eyes were glaring daggers onto Matthew Brown.

“I told you. *Sit.*” Nigel said, his voice growing harsh in irritation. Just minutes ago he was soaring high off Will’s affection, but Matthew’s teasing tone has brought it all crashing down. Suspicions and doubt began to cloud over Matthew’s friendly greeting, and Nigel began to wonder if Will was hiding something behind his desperate petition.

“I know what you’re thinking.” Will muttered quietly. “That’s how my father looks when he thinks I’m lying.”

The boy looked so guilty and small, and Nigel immediately regret ever thinking something so stupid. Of course someone as perceptive as Will was going to notice. Nigel wore his heart out on his sleeve, no effective barriers between irrational thoughts and violent actions. To Will, it must be as opaque as glass.

“I...” Nigel struggled to find the right words to say, but they all just seem so saccharine and false to his jaded mind. “I’ll believe whatever you tell me, Will.”

The boy frowned, unable to understand the leaps of emotion from the aggressive man. He wanted to trust Nigel, his lonely heart desperate for companionship and understanding. Though Will wanted a friend more than anything, he refused to be doubted and looked down upon by anyone else again.

But Nigel didn’t look at him with the same condescending look his father or teachers give. The man looked almost embarrassed, apologetic even, as if the very act of questioning Will was a sin against his own personal creed.

It’s disorienting to be taken so seriously like that. Will was used to have his words dismissed and pushed aside by others. He’s just a kid, they say, how could he possibly say anything of importance? With Nigel Will felt like he was the axis that hold up the whole universe, and right on the center of it was Nigel, forever orbiting him like an eternal sun.

He hated being in the spotlight like this, but if it's with Nigel...

Before Will to speak up to assuage the man's doubts and questions, the café door chimed open and Matthew walked out with a cup of coffee in hand.

"Don't be late for class." He said, winking playfully at Will. The boy tensed up once more, his whole body petrified in genuine fear, but Matthew seemed to delight in his distress. He chuckled, "Cute." before sauntering off without a care in the world, joining his own group of friends who welcomed him with easy camaraderie.

Nigel watched the exchange with a subdued look plastered across his face. "It would be simpler if you just tell me to beat the crap out of him." He sighed, fiddling with a stick of cigarette between his fingers. To anyone else the man looked deep in thought, almost peaceful in his stillness, but Will could read the restrained agitation in every one of Nigel's movements.

He said nothing. How could he tell Nigel that he wanted nothing more than to let the man loose on Matthew? His words weighed so much, and he was sure that Nigel wouldn't mind bringing back Matthew's head just to satisfy his wistful fancies.

Getting an attack dog for protection was a mistake. They were bred for one singular purpose and without fulfilling their *raison d'être*, they would grow bored, disenchanted, destructive. Will could read the writing on the wall. Today Nigel might worried his pack of cigarettes to ashes, but tomorrow who know what the man would get himself into just to stave off his boredom.

The future worried him, that just seem like the default setting for the anxious little boy. They're barely a day in and Wi was already regretting his decision, but when he looked up to voice his concern, the man looked down to him gently and tousled his hair.

"Calm down darling. I'm still with you." He rumbled, smoothing down the messy head with nicotine stained fingers and addictive gentleness. Will sighed, holding the hand against his cheek to keep the man close.

This strange contract of theirs may not last even the year, but that doesn't mean Will couldn't still enjoy Nigel's company.

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Though there's a distinct honor in protecting someone who needed him, the ennui of service work pervaded Nigel's mind a mere moment after Will's departure. As ridiculous as it might sound, Nigel couldn't help but feel abandoned in their separation. It's hardest in the morning. He just spent a whole night pining over the boy, after only sharing a short walk, they were immediately separated for the day.

It always surprised him just how devastating it all was. Nigel prided himself in being a tough guy, never complaining about his scrapes and bruises. Yet just being apart from Will made him want to whine and pout like a child being denied of his toys.

It's not a good look, so Nigel tamped down those desires and took his usual post at the café. He ordered his coffee and breakfast, took a picture of the day's sickeningly bright pastry, and sent it to Will, hoping that the boy might spare him a fraction of his attention so he might keep his sanity.

The rumble from his phone brought on a rush of endorphin, and Nigel would read and reread the clever reply, taking it each pixel greedily. It would only sustain him for a few minutes, and when the jitter of sugar and caffeine began to hit him, Nigel would escape to the bathroom to snort up a few bumps of coke just to pick up his mood.

He knew that doing drugs while at work was a bad idea. Though it took his mind off the boy, it also made him more agitated than before. After a while all Nigel wanted to do was pick a fight with somebody, but he couldn't risk getting thrown out his post. Nigel didn't want to do anything that would dishonor the boy's name. Will has had enough to deal with, and the man was hired to solve them, not to create more headaches and problems.

He tried books, but Nigel couldn't sit still to read past a few pages. He fiddled with various apps and games on his phone, but the repeated offers of virtual currency made him delete them within minutes of installations. Being social was out of the question. Aside from its student patrons, the

café was near deserted during school hours, and Nigel wouldn't want to inflict his moodiness to the poor baristas working for their pitiful wage.

Walking around seemed to help. He patrolled the massive school property, taking note of the entrances and exit in hopes of catching a glimpse of Will from one of the windows. It's quite pathetic just how attached Nigel has become in just the span of a few weeks, and when that particular line of thought bothered him, the man would reach for his little packet of coke and distract himself with some temporary high.

It's a strange thing, this intense burning that ate at his soul. Before meeting Will Nigel never had this problem before. Sure he was in between jobs, but even as an unemployed trash of society there were plenty of things to do. From loose desperate women to shady construction jobs. Neither ever lasted. The only women looking for a lay at that time were usually nervous housewives who's looking for a bit of fun, and the pitiful pay from his demanding foreman would only spark argument that ended with his fist buried in their faces.

Those situations were beyond sad and pathetic, and Nigel repeated told himself that this job was an upgrade to his previously pitiful situation. He couldn't afford fucking this up. It won't be like losing a shitty job he hated or ghosting a needy stranger who's only interested in his dick. Disappointing Will would devastate the boy and put a target right back on his head. It would be more merciful to kill Will outright than to just leave him defenseless.

Still, there's something quite devastating in Nigel's loneliness. He tried not to think about it too much, and the endless coffee refills and occasional coke bumps helped distract him, but it clung to him like a stubborn moss growing to dominate his thoughts. Just as much as the boy needed him, Nigel too needed Will to survive.

Logically, Nigel knew that the boy had to go to school. It's the noblest pursuit a child could do, to better themselves so that they could be of use to society. Yet even with those things in mind a selfish part of him wanted to pluck the boy from his classes and keep him forever by his side. Fuck society and their needs. They don't deserve him anyways. Its only when Nigel remembered that he didn't deserve the boy either that he could abandon those silly desires and settle back onto his seat.

Boredom and melancholia ruled, that is, until the lunchtime bell rang and Will arrive to release him from their grasp.

The boy would emerge from the crowd hungry students, furtive and small in stature, inspiring a fierce instinct to protect and nurture. Yet unlike the weeks before, Will no longer scurried to him with a nervous look on his face. The boy was happy, and his smile was enough lit the quenched beacon of Nigel's fire.

The man came alive with his arrival, all thoughts of his dark past forgotten as he gave Will every ounce of his attention. Nigel listened to everything he said, because he knows that no one else listened to Will like he does.

No subject was too dull, for how could he be bored of Will's many achievements? Pride swelled his chest as the boy spread out his test and showed him his perfect marks. "You're so smart." Nigel would gush every day. Hardworking. Kind. Gentle. The adjective changed every day, but the sincerity remained the same.

Though Will brushed them off with no small measure of disbelief, Nigel knew he enjoyed every one of them. Will cherished his words, rationing each syllable so they might help him power through the hostility of his class, and knowing that his words had weight gave Nigel peace.

How could he claim boredom when he could lift spirits by simply speaking the truth? Nigel simply witnessed the boy and acknowledged what others was blind to. It's as easy as breathing, but he could see the impact of his words in the minute changes to Will's demeanor. As days passed he began to walk taller, claiming his space instead of hunching down and remain invisible. Where before he used to mumble, now his words carried, charged by excitement and joy.

Though puberty spurred the growth of his body, Nigel quietly tend to Will's spirit, building him with words and acknowledgement, leaving his mark by virtue of simply being there.

He began to see their separation less as a suffering and more like worship. He couldn't voice his affection out loud, but Nigel was content in his quiet declaration of love. The endless waiting, the removal of selfish desires, his unrelenting protection; they would not be possible if he didn't love someone enough to do them. It's wrong to be attracted to someone so young, he knew that well enough, but as long as he could see Will, touch him in a some veiled brotherly affection, Nigel could convince himself to be content.

The tragedy was only in separation, but Nigel held on knowing that it would only last until their next meeting. He never said goodbye, always sending the boy off with "See you tomorrow." For

how could he endure the long stretched of hour without the hope of seeing Will again?

Alone in his apartment Nigel held on to that feeling. When his past caught up to him and prevented sleep from claiming him, Nigel would turn to the needle for help. He was eager for sleep, for in his dream he would meet Will, and when he wake, Nigel would leap out of bed so he could make it a reality.

What a beautiful suffering it all was, all for the sake of his beautiful boy.

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There were only a handful of comforts that humans really need to have. Food, shelter, clothes. Everything else really was optional, and for the longest time Will truly believed that he could survive with just that.

Though family was a foreign concept, he wanted it for the longest time in his life. He survived without an emotional connection with his father, and Will believed that he would be just fine without it. Afterall, an unfulfilled expectation only leads to pain, and as a survivor Will has learn to go through life minimizing the unnecessary hurt that he could avoid.

Which was why he felt so stupid standing in front of the gate waiting for a man who wasn't there.

"Everything alright Will?" Winston asked, finding it impossibly to sit by and ignore Will's anxious fidgeting. "He's late, huh?"

Will bit his lips and nodded, waving the guard's concerns with a practiced smile that felt stiff on his lips. "He probably just overslept." Will said, hoping that his voice wouldn't sound too pathetically small. Noticing the boy's discomfort, Winston nodded and returned back to his post. His stuff was already packed up, but he wanted to make sure that Will was alright.

The boy in question looked down on his phone screen and thumbed through the myriad of messages he sent to Nigel. The man usually replied immediately, but for some reason today he didn't even read any of his messages.

*'Maybe his phone unplugged during the night or something.'* He tried to explain reasonably, but it still wasn't enough to calm himself down.

Nigel was supposed to be here. That's what he's paid to do. It may be unfair for Will to be so demanding of him, but Nigel has become an integral part of his morning. Without him, everything felt out of balance. Only his presence could bring him safety, and his absence didn't just signal a lack of responsibility, it felt like a betrayal.

As soon as he realized his irrational line of thought, Will immediately stopped himself. It was unfair for him to expect Nigel to be a perfect person. He found him in a run down dive bar. He's not a professionally trained bodyguard Will hired from an agency. He's just a thug who happened pity his situation. Tardiness should not only be excused, Will should've expected it.

It's a disappointing way of looking at the world, but Will much rather subscribe to jaded skepticism than be a hopeful fool and hurt himself with his expectation. Afterall, people are slaves to their own follies and weaknesses. They can't always be perfect.

*'I don't need him to be perfect. I just need him to be here.'* He quietly said, still unable to let go of his disappointment even after all that talk.

He sat on the curb waiting for Nigel until homeroom passed. When the man still didn't show up, Will picked himself up and began his lonely walk. To school. This was the first time he's ever been tardy to class, but even the threat of detention couldn't make him move any faster.

Without the man school seemed too daunting. Will has grown used to having him close. News of his existence had kept Francis and Matthew well away. They might not notice it today, but as soon as they realized that Nigel was gone, they would surely resume their torments.

He stopped in front of the school doors and hesitated. Even though he knew that it's all useless, Will pulled out his phone and sent Nigel one last text.

**Will (10:10):** Please come at lunch. Or afterschool. I need you Nigel.

He pocketed his phone and turned it on silence. He wanted the man to be able to reach him, if he ever decide to wake up that is. There's a very real possibility that Nigel has grown tired of this game and run off with his money , and though Will expected it in the first few days, it's already the start of a new semester. Will really thought that Nigel enjoyed being with him.

It would break his heart if the opposite was true.

Trying to shake off his paranoid thoughts, Will walked through the halls of his school with the familiar sense of trepidation weighing heavily on his shoulders. It's silly to expect the worst when everything was going on as usual. Classes was still in session, and the halls were devoid of the uncaring faces of his schoolmates, but somehow Will expected Matthew or Francis to jump from some darkened corner.

Will knew he was being stupid, but he still couldn't shake himself out of it.

"Graham!" The booming voice of the elderly principal called from an open door, jolting Will up from his spot and making him drop all of his books. "In my office please." He said, curt and succinct before disappearing behind the door.

Before Will could ponder on the reasoning behind his summons, the bell rang to signal the end of second period. Immediately the silent school came alive with the groans and chattering's of its inhabitants.

Doors opened and children poured out in impatient waves, all rushing to get to their next class. Heavy footsteps moved past him like the stampedes of buffalos, part of an uncaring masses that cared very little for him, and immediately his uncollected books were kicked and strewn to edge of the hall.

There were a few mumbled apologies, but nobody stopped to helped him. A feer jeering laugh rang, and when Will looked up to snap back in anger , hiss f ace immediately paled. Francis was amongst his crowd of jeering teammates, staring at Will with a deadpan expression on his face.

Will knew that the man wished he could kick his face instead of the books, and for once Will was glad to be a part of a crowd.

Will ducked and gathered his book, ruined and hanging loosely from the spine. He didn't have time to mourn them, and he rushed into the principal office to escape any contact from Francis and his goons.

The principal frowned at the state of his books but said nothing of them. "Am I in trouble?" Will asked, biting his lips as he took his seat.

"Oh no, no." The principal laughed, the flat stony face of his relaxing into his humanlike lines. "You've been an excellent student Mr. Graham. Good grades, polite, some of your teachers even told me you work ahead on your free time."

Will nodded hesitantly. He wasn't sure it's something to be proud of. Afterall, what else was there to do when no one else would socialize with him?

The principal didn't share his views. He was used to reprimanding troublemakers and delinquents, to host a bright boy in his office was a welcomed addiction. "Good, very good. Though your grades at PE is... average, and your teachers said you're too shy to socialize, but those aren't important." He said, flipping through a file and disregarding them completely.

"I don't get along with kids my age." Will mumbled, but his forced nonchalance didn't feel convincing enough even for him.

The principal chuckled, though Will didn't know if a lack of friends were something to be laughed about. "Then I you will be glad to hear that you'll be skipping grades." The man said, lacing his fingers together with an expectant smile.

"... I am?" Will said, his voice flat in disbelief.

“Yes! Your midterm results are perfect, and your essays clearly showed that you’re much far long in your understanding of your classes.” He run his fingers down the file. “Everyone one of your teachers were concerned that you’re simply wasting your time in their classes, and I quite agree with them. If the lessons don’t challenge our mind, then how will we keep our heads sharp.”

Will smiled and forced himself to nod along to his words. The principal was obviously a proud man, and he was less concerned about Will’s intellectual advancement than the prestige it brought to the public school, but he wouldn’t say it out loud. If Hamilton high has taught him anything it’s that sometimes being silent was better than speaking his mind.

“So this semester you’ll be starting in our advanced placement classes. Here’s a list of the new books you will need to pick up from your library, as well as the locations of your new classroom.” The man spared him a small smile as he slid over a piece of paper. “Congratulations Will, you’re a junior now.”

Will just stared at the paper, too shocked to be able to read them. “Wait, really?” He asked, still half convinced that this was all some sick joke designed to pull the rug from under him.

“Yes. Keep up with your class and you’ll graduate when you’re sixteen. It will look *very* good on your college applications. The good ones always look for standouts like you.”

The mention of college allowed a genuine smile to bloom across Will’s nervous face. He’s one step close away from this life he hated, where he can move out from his empty home and start again in a new place where bullying was passé and the only one he needed to rely on was himself.

Will smiled, glowing with pride even with the somber acknowledgement of his impending separation from Nigel. “Thank you sir, I won’t let you down.” He said with renewed determination, eager to prove to the principle the he made the right choice. The man walked him out with a warm pat on his back, and Will held onto that passing encouragement, focusing on it so he didn’t have to think about Nigel.

He busied himself in the library, trading his ruined book for shiny new ones he vowed to take better care off. He still had to pay a fine for messing up his old one, the usually kind librarian glaring at the boy as he handed over his money, but even that little hiccup wasn’t enough to put a damper on his spirits.

Though he was eager to start his new classes, Will knew that walking in during a class would only draw unwanted attention to him. So he escaped to a lonely little corner, peeling open his new books with reverence and reading through his class list. Much to his delight, he found himself under the tutelage of the kind Ms. Bloom, and Will promised to himself that he would try his best in her class.

After spending lunch settling his affairs and sneaking bites in his little corner, Will walked over to a different wing where the advanced classes were housed in. The classroom was smaller in size. Hamilton focused their budget nurturing exceptional athletes, not academics, but Will was glad for that. Maybe there he could find some kindred spirits who wouldn't needlessly torment him like in his previous class.

When lunch ended Will almost came in late to his new calculus class, beating the bell in just a fraction of a second the only table that remained was the one right up front. Will picked sat in it without complaint. He opened his books and began reading through his syllabus.

The teacher smiled at him and welcomed him to the class without too much of a preamble, but he insisted that Will greet his classmates himself. He turned shyly in his seat, but before he could say anything he immediately froze. Matthew Brown was there, nudging a student behind Will to switch seat with him.

"... Hi, my name's Will. N..nice to meet you all."

A scattered but friendly welcome popped up here and there, but Matthew leaned back on his seat and crossed his arms, smiling smugly at Will's presence. When the teacher turned around to write a problem on the board the swimmer leaned forward and whispered right into his ear.

"Pretty birdy." He purred. "You missed me so much that you had to come and skip a grade for me didn't you?" He chuckled, grazing a finger along the back of Will's neck. The boy shivered, but he was too afraid to even move a muscle. Matthew chuckled, taking a deep breath close to his hair.

"Oh, we're going to have some fun this year, aren't we Will?"

## Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3

# Shame

## Chapter Summary

Waking up from his drug fuelled stupor, Nigel realised something was amiss when he received a disturbing phone call

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When he woke up with a familiar sense of sluggish contentment, Nigel instantly knew that something was wrong.

His mind was too quiet, stripped of his inherent self-loathing and perpetually mounding guilt. His dreams were neither pleasant images of Will or the terrifying nightmare of his old flame. There was just noting, just a hum of white emptiness interspersed by pleasurable jolt that coursed through his body like static.

In many ways, it's what Nigel thought heaven would feel like, and he woke up, he did so with a keen sense of disappointment at his continued existence. Yet he arose nonetheless, body trained to the routine he had learned for the sake of another.

Like usual Will was the first thing on his mind. He found that his heart had missed the boy, but his body craved for something else, something as dangerous and addictive as Will's beautiful smile. The lights reflecting off his popcorn ceiling has grown from its warm dawn glow to a brighter shine, enough to indicate that the man was already late for work.

Yet when Nigel went to blink, his eyes were instantly glued shut as his ragged body demanded further rest. When he woke up one more, hours have passed, and Nigel jolted up in a tangled mess of cold sweat with an itch for chemical stimulation.

As he kicked off the mess of sheets tangled across his legs, Nigel quickly found more than just dirty fabric clinging to his body. His peeling leather belt was warped loosely around his arm, its descent stopped by a syringe plunged deep into his bicep. On his messy nightstand was a mess of drug paraphernalia; brown bottles with white powder residue, a mirror with much of the same, and little spoon, bent back over a makeshift alcohol burner he fashioned out of an empty ben can and rope.

Those last two were recently added to his collection. Nigel wished he could say that he did so begrudgingly, but the truth was he came to his dealer after memories of Gabi kept him awake, desperate for something to put him to sleep. With a sinister cackle the shady man slid over a smaller packet than the one Nigel usually get, throwing in some used needles and a warning to 'start slow'.

Being the arrogant prick that he was, Nigel immediately ignored such warnings. He needed to sleep, or else he won't be able to function properly for Will. In hindsight, he was an idiot to do so.

He hasn't touched heroin since he broke up with Gabi, and the effect was so intense that he only managed to stay conscious for a few seconds after he injected It's reckless and embarrassing, and seeing the various paraphernalia he had sworn to never touch again filled him with a deep sense of humiliation.

Horried at what he had done, Nigel grabbed the needle and belt to hurl them across the room. The hit the wall with the clatter, which prompted an irritated "Keep it down!" from his neighbor on other side of his thin walls.

If he wasn't itching for his next fix Nigel would've punched though the plaster entirely. He know he should've been more respectful, after he's not the only dangerous man living on his apartment, but at his current state of fevered agitation, Nigel's mind was too fixated on his next fix to care.

A bead of blood pearled over the puncture mark he reopened, drawing Nigel's attention right to the tiny dot. The man instinctively swiped it between his fingers and rubbed them between his gums, a habit long grown from a lifetime of cocaine use and one just as hard to quit. A wretched part of him still hoped to find a residue to give him a buzz, but the moment he realized what he was doing, Nigel immediately spat out a big glob of spit and bit down in anger.

“What the hell am I doing?” The man asked aloud. He was used to disappointing other people, but when he failed to meet even his own meager expectation, Nigel knew that something was truly wrong.

On many levels Nigel expected this to happen. He never really addressed his drug habit, only cutting back to lighter stuff when money became scarce after his divorce from Gabi. It was only a matter of time for his resolve to break now that he’s flushed with cash. He thought he truly had it under control, that he had something better to live for than chasing some passing high.

The thought of his charge immediately spurred Nigel to action. He reached for his phone, expecting a barrage of angry and demanding messages, but when he went to unlock his phone, Nigel was only greeted with a black screen.

“Shit.” The man slapped his forehead and rubbed his brows in frustration. He pawed blindly for the charger behind his bed and left the phone to take a shower. Nigel reeked of sweat, smoke, and the vinegary scent of cheap heroin. Since he’s already late, the least he could do was show up presentable while he begs for forgiveness.

He’s a functional addict goddammit, not one of those useless tweaker whose whole existence revolved on their next fix, and he will show up like one an apologize to his darling without making too much of a fuss.

Then again, replacing his fixation from addictive substance to Will Graham may not be the best coping mechanism, but it’s only way Nigel knew how to live. To hold something high as his beacon of motivation, putting his life on the line for the pursuit of one singular thing. It’s his own demented brand of religion, one that fulfilled him to the very atoms of his soul.

He wanted to be good for Will, but for the life of him, Nigel didn’t know why he just couldn’t stop fucking up.

With a fresh dose of self-loathing, the man bared himself and stepped into the shower. He turned his rusty tap to its limits, hoping that the hot water might stop his jitters and fortify him for the day. When it didn’t, Nigel turned the dial to the left so that the freezing cold might wake him up. Neither helped. Nigel felt as squalid and weak as the moment he stepped into the room, and no amount of water and soap could wash away his shame.

After quickly finishing up his shower, Nigel dragged his feet to the bed, impatiently jumping from one foot to the next as he waited for his screen to load up. When his phone finally held it's barest charge, his screen turned on with a dig and was immediately bombarded with a slew of notifications.

Before Will, Nigel was used to seeing his icons unadorned with those red dots. Afterall, no one was looking for a fuck up like him. The only one that ever contacted him was Will, but this time his messages didn't fill him with warm feelings fo belonging and satisfaction. The boy was looking for him, and Nigel was going to bear witness to his progression of disappointment.

Though trepidation ruled and anguish was closely following, Nigel went ahead and checked his messages, forcing himself to read through every bubble of text even though he knew it will break his heart to do so.

**Will (07:02):** Morning J

Nigel usually replied to this message the second he got it. Just seeing it made him want to type out 'Morning darling' even after it's been long sent.

**Will (08:10):** I'm already at the gate

**Will (08:25):** Will you be here soon?

**Will (08:40):** Nigel?

There was a brief pause on the messages where Nigel imagined Will just standing alone waiting for his useless self to come. The boy must've been so anxious, and he hoped that at least the guards at the gate kept him company, though the thought of that smug faced Winston taking his place raised Nigel's hackles and made him want to bite.

**Will (08:50):** Ok, I'm walking to school now

The man frowned at the sad image the message conjured. There's so many promises he broke already, and it weighed heavily on the man to broke this one too. It's not because his livelihood depended on keeping them intact, but because Nigel was not a man who shied away from responsibilities.

**Will (09:15):** The principal put me in AP classes

**Will (09:15):** That means I can graduate early!

**Will (09:15):** We should celebrate afterschool

**Will (09:16):** Maybe get a burger at the diner we went to before?

Nigel heart swelled with pride, his cheeks hurting from his smile as he reread those line of text. He knew his boy was special, that he was worth all those droll, boring hours sitting in the café. Nigel was guarding a special gem, and he wanted nothing more than for Will to shine to his fullest potential.

**Will (10:10):** Please come at lunch

**Will (10:10):** Or afterschool

**Will (10:11):** I don't care that you're late

**Will (10:11):** I'm not angry

**Will (10:12):** I just need you here Nigel

**Will (12:28):** Please come. You promised.

Nigel stared long and hard at the series of messages, the boy's disappointment palpable even through the screen. His hands hovered over the keys, typing and retyping messages that could never seem enough.

Just as he was going to hit send on a particularly pathetic "I'm sorry", his phone buzzed and rang with the ringtone he selected just for Will. The boy's picture came on screen, a side profile he snapped in secret, and Nigel jumped and almost dropped his phone from the shock of it all.

"Darling." He answered breathily, unable to discern if his nerves from guilt or his need for his next fix. "I'm so, so, so fucking sorry I'm--"

The boy's sweet words did not greet him in anger or disappointment. In fact, Will didn't answer back at all. The only thing that greeted him was the muffled conversation happening the

distance, interspersed by physical static that scratched against the microphone. Nigel thought that the boy just pocket dialed him, but he listened on, hungry for any morsel of information.

The voices grew an aggressive cadence that quickly alarmed Nigel to attention. He expected a fight, a clatter indicating a scuffle of something violent, but what followed was a subdued reply, said by a familiar voice trained in despondency. This time, Nigel could make out his words clearly.

“Matthew... Please.”

A throaty chuckle was heard, louder and more confident than Will’s thin voice. “You know you can just call me Matt, right?”

There’s a small imperceptible whimper as they shifted, Matthew’s voice growing louder in his approach. There’s a dim squeal of “Stop.” And Nigel felt his blood boiling, wishing he could materialize his body to put between Will and this predator.

“What is this?” There was an ear piercing ruffle before the dampened sounds turned clear. “Oh you’re a naughty little birdy, aren’t you?” The villainous voice said right next to the microphone, his voice as clear as day.

“Get the fuck away from him you little-“ Nigel shouted, but the line immediately went dead.

At that moment Nigel couldn’t care less about his next fix. His boy was in trouble and it was all because he’s too much of a fuck up to show up to work. He immediately pulled on his clothes and rushed out of the door, hailing a cab he’s usually too cheap to take and telling the drive to book it.

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Will expected Matthew to bother him throughout class, but the older boy was a model student that kept mostly to himself. When the teacher prompted the class with a question, he raised his

hands to answer them. During group discussion, he was considerate and polite, allowing other people to express his opinion while taking his own moment to shine.

It was... disconcerting, to say the least. Will already knew that the boy was well liked, but he didn't realize just how popular Matthew was with both the students and teachers.

As one of the few athletes in an AP class, he's a spectacle of his own much like Will. He conducted himself like a perfect student, courteous and polite while ignoring the social strata of high school hierarchies. It endeared him to everyone there, the social butterfly who sat pretty while the flowers uproot themselves too be near him.

Despite all of that, Will could see right through Matthew's artifice. He recognized the faint glint of disdain he had for everyone in the room. It showed in the twitch in his lips whenever a student cuts through his words, or the way his hand tightened whenever someone approached Will to say hello.

In Matthew's eyes, he's already claimed Will as his and he would love nothing more to lavish violence unto anyone who dared come near his property. Still, when he smiled everyone smiled back, thinking themselves lucky to have interacted with someone like Matthew Brown.

But Will knew the truth. He's playing them all for fools and they're just eating it up like fools feasting on refuse.

So when the class ended, Will hurried out of the room before Matthew had the chance to stop him. He was aided by his eager classmates, all of them hounding Mr. Popular with questions and offers of study dates. Matthew ignored them all, eyes squarely trained on Will's slender neck, imagining a necklace of livid bruises around it as his own personal sign of ownership.

Will could practically taste the malice radiating upon his back.

He quickly escaped to his next class, sighing in relief when he found himself in a much smaller class without his tormentor. Thankfully the trend continued throughout the day, and before long Will found out that they only shared a subject together, with him taking more of the sciences and Matthew focusing on humanities.

It seemed that fate had finally showed him some mercy, though Will couldn't fathom how he would survive the next two years sitting in front of Matthew Brown, even if it was only for one class.

When the bell rang to signal the end of the day, Will escaped to his little hiding spot in the library to wait out the afternoon rush. He didn't want to be plucked out of the crowd by either Matthew or Francis's cronies without Nigel standing guard. He's had experienced enough terror for one day and he certainly wasn't going to bet against fate and put himself in a vulnerable situation.

Temporarily trapped in a place he would rather escape from, Will took out his books and dutifully did his homework. For the life of him the boy just couldn't seem to be able to concentrate. His eyes keep getting drawn back to his phone, still ever hopeful for the deliverance that Nigel's presence might bring.

He waited for an hour, then another, and before long the sky outside was already painted in a manic orange glow of encroaching sunset. It made the street look like hell, and Will was sure he might be trapped in one too.

After swallowing his disappointment and accepting Nigel's absence, Will tidied up his things and began walking downstairs. The school was empty, long abandoned by both student and staff. A single custodian patrolled the halls, his well-known surly attitude forcing Will to remain hidden from sight. When the man disappeared to maintain the football fields, Will breathed out a sigh of relief and continued on his retreat.

"There you are." A large hand fell onto his shoulder, pulling him stumbling back from the stairs and pushing him flush onto the wall. Matthew's face grinned down, his hair damp and skin smelling of chlorine as he crowded Will's. "I've been looking everywhere for you."

*'He had swim practice.'* Will thought helplessly, cursing himself for forgetting something so important. The boy desperately looked around, hoping to catch a sight of one of Matthew's teammates, but the school was silent, bereft of witnesses or passing saviors.

Matthew leaned in for a kiss, his breath growing ragged at the sight of boy's fear creeping into place. Will immediately turned his face, desperately trying to avoid Matthew's incoming lips.

Undeterred, Matthew latched onto Will's slender neck, growling in victory as he sucked a hickey at the column of skin that's been tempting him all day.

"Stop." Will said. He wanted to scream, but there's a lump in his throat that made everything he said sound feeble and pathetic. Matthew let out an unhappily rumble, but ultimately did nothing. Why should he? Will was trapped here alone with him with nowhere else to go. He wanted to be gentle with him, to show the boy how good he can make him. For as adorable as Will's frightened squeal and whimpers were, Matthew wanted a lasting connection, and that could never happen while Will was under duress.

So he gently pawed down the boy's body, slipping his hand under his shirt to find a nipple to teased until it pebbled. Will immediately seized up, one hands still pushing against his chest to stop his encroachment while the other fumbled helplessly to keep them apart.

"Wait what are you- Stop!" Will yelped, his voice growing ragged at the unwanted stimulation. He reached into the bag he held between their bodies, enduring Matthew's ravenous licking as he tried to dial for Nigel's number. A glimmer of hope resurfaced as the line went through, but before Will could do anything Matthew had already pulled his bag away to make room for more contact.

"Matthew... please." He pleaded, trying with all his might to push the boy away, but even

"You know you can just call me Matt, right?" He chuckled, amused at the boy's attempt to distance himself. "God, you're so fucking pretty." He leaned in once more, strong hands keeping Will's face in place as he devoured the boy's mouth. "Couldn't get anywhere close to you with that idiot hanging around, can I? Fuck, Will. You make me so angry sometimes, but that's okay. You're too pretty to stay mad at." Matthew babbled on, setting Will's teeth on edge with very word.

It made him so sick to his stomach. The blatant disregard for his wishes. The willful blindness that bordered on madness. It all sickened him, for this was an expression of passion or love. Matthew only saw Will as receptacle for his desire, a prize to own owned, marked, and urinated on for good measure. It disgusted him to be seen as a weak, inanimate thing, but the thing that disgust him more was the fact the it's true.

Will could resist, he could enlist other people for help, but the truth of the matter was he couldn't fight with his own power. He's too weak, and for that he truly hated himself.

Still he fought nonetheless, pushing the weight of his own body against Matthew's to reclaim the space he so carelessly invaded, but the older boy wouldn't budge. Every inch gained were cruelly wrenched back, with unworthy hands and wet lips and teeth that's far too sharp to be loving.

"I don't want this." Will said, willing his tears away to hold onto what little dignity he had left. Matthew paused at Will's undeniable refusal, his eyes flaring with anger and a crazed obsession. Will panicked, so he raised his voice louder hoping that Nigel was listening and picked up on his distress.

"I have to get home. Please just let me go home." Will continued, his eyes darting nervously to the bag laying strewn on the floor. Matthew's eyes followed, narrowing as he sensed something amiss. With one hand firmly keeping Will in place, he rummaged through the bag and found his phone connected to a call with Nigel's face on the screen.

It's a picture Will took in secret when the man was distracted, one he regularly stared at whenever Will felt lonely and wanted to call the man to keep him company. It brought him relief and hope, but the sight only incensed Matthew further, because to him, Nigel was not just a rival for the boy's affection, he's a downright obstacle he was eager to remove.

"What is this?" Matthew chuckled darkly as he showed Will his phone, the screen indicating a connected call to the man Will's been looking for all day. "Oh, you're a naughty little birdy, aren't you?" When Will looked away in guilt, Matthew threw the entire content of Will's bag down the stairs and his phone along with it.

"No!" The boy yelped, struggling against Matthew's hold to catch it before it tumbled down the stairs, but his arms flailed uselessly in the air, too short and weak to even save himself.

Satisfied at the carnage he created, Matthew gripped Will's shoulder's and marched him down the stairs. Will twisted and pulled to try and escape, but the boy's hold remained devastatingly true.

"Why are you doing this? Why do you hate me so much?!" Will screamed, the tears he tried so hard to hold back seeping between his lashes.

Matthew stopped in front of a classroom, his face twisted in pain as yet another person failed to understand him. "I don't hate you at all." He said, his voice quiet and reproachful. "You're special Will, I knew it the moment I laid eyes on you. You're just like me." Matthew said with a quiet sense of disappointment.

It was then that Will could see Matthew as he truly was. It's easy to dismiss him as a psychopath, a villain for the boy to hate, but Will could see his loneliness.

Just like Will with his father, Matthew fatigued himself daily just so he could fit in with the masses he's rather consume. It's a predator's camouflage but kept him lonely just as much as it kept him safe, and he desperately wanted to be seen and understood. Matthew thought Will was able to do that, so like any beast out in the wild, he claimed him as his own.

But monsters like Matthew knew nothing of love or respect, and Will's repeated refusal has chipped away his patience and brought out something more dangerous. He dragged the boy by the scruff of his neck towards an empty classroom, malicious intent radiating from the pores of his skin. Will knew that something terrible awaits behind that door, so he held onto the doorframe, sinking the heels of his skittering feet to prevent Matthew from pushing him in.

Matthew seemed amused by his defiance, chuckling as he gave the boy one hard shove that sent him stumbling into the room. "You're so cute when you're angry." He said as he closed the door. "Imagine how adorable you must be when you're in pain."

Will's heart dropped as he scrambled up to throw a fist towards him, but the older boy just laughed and plucked his hand out from the air, holding it still as he kissed his fluttering pulse.

"Come on little bird." He purred, dragging Will toward a storeroom in the back of the classroom, like a hyena dragging a carcass to consume.

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At first Will resisted. He kicked and punched Matthew wherever he could reach him, and when the older boy drew close, Will resorted to savage claws and bites. They didn't seem to bother him, for after taking off his shirt Matthew returned his savagery with equal enthusiasm, shivering at the feel of Will's soft body and his blunted teeth.

"Yeah, that's it. Scratch me deeper babe. It'll show the boys at practice just how fucking wild you are." He purred, amazed at how easily Will bruise under his touch. When Will froze at the mention of his teammates, Matthew knew he had struck a nerve. "I'm such a generous guy, I'll even share you with them. Bet you would like that, won't you, slut?"

Of course he would do no such thing, Matthew was too jealous to let anyone touch his prize, but the fear in Will's eyes was so tantalizing that it made his mouth watered. When he thought Will was finally tamed, Matthew leaned in to press their lips together.

It immediately snapped Will awake. The mix of blood and saliva tasted like static on his tongue. It was foul. The hands on his body, the erection rutting against his leg, the sound of Matthew's pleased purrs. His disgusting teeth and hands that added more marks to his body, red bites, scratches, and hickeys joining the collection of fading bruises he received from Francis's underlings.

Those marks will fade, but they feel more permanent than scars and tattoos. They sunk deeper than they ever had the right to, pushing away his dignity to make way for their wriggling existence. Will wanted to skin himself alive just to get them out, and so he did, clawing at both Matthew's skin and his own, struggling to no avail like a small animal caught in an eagle's talon's.

Matthew ripped his pants away, laughing at the sight of Will's soft cock. "Cute." He chuckled, his voice disparaging and adoring at the same time. Will bucked away trying to scoot further from Matthew's touch, but he was easily pinned in place as he threaded his fingers through the peach fuzz growing at the base of Will's groin.

"Fuck." He groaned, aroused by the sight and feel of someone so pure. Unable to resist himself, Matthew pulled down his pants and rubbed his larger cock against Will's flaccid ones, his hard-leaking member contrasting against Will's virginal genitals.

The boy screamed, knowing that this might be his last chance to call for help, but it was all swallowed by Matthew's claiming lips.

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When the taxi screeched to a halt, Nigel threw a handful of cash to the driver and bolted into the darkened school. The building was empty, devoid of any signs of life, but Nigel knew that Will was still around. He wouldn't have been in trouble when he's anywhere near Dragon's Bluff, the security was too tight for that, so it narrowed down the locations to the school and the stretch they usually walked on.

He looked around and caught sight of the boy's iconic leather bag strewn amongst a tornado of papers and books. Not far from it laid the boy's phone, the battery almost drained and the screen cracked from impact. Nigel was no detective, but he's been in enough bar fights to recognize a sign of struggle when he sees one, and this only made him even more worried than he already was.

"Fuck." Nigel cursed, suddenly feeling helpless at his current situation. He reached in for his last bottle of cocaine, a crutch he could never seem to shake off.

After taking a quick line off the back of his hand, Nigel suddenly realized that he might just fucked up more than he knew. The school was deserted, not even a janitor in sight, and if Will wasn't here then he hasn't had any idea where he's been dragged to.

Just seconds before he bolted out into the street, Nigel noticed a light shining from under a door, standing out amongst the row of darkened classroom. Letting his instinct take over, Nigel immediately slammed the door open, calling desperately for his boy so he might answer.

"Will!" He shouted, but it echoed in the empty classroom.

Nigel cursed out loud. He could still feel the presence people in the air, the place just recently vacated, but it seemed like he was too late. If they were here then they've long moved to another place and Nigel had no idea where to look.

When he turned to leave, he heard a muffled sound from the far end of the classroom. It was small, barely a whimper, but he could recognize the voice anywhere. Nigel marched along the rows of tables and chairs, eyes zeroing to the supply closet he almost missed, but when he tried to turn the handle, the door was locked.

But the muffled sound grew louder, and louder, until it became an audible cry of distress dampened by the wood.

Without even thinking twice Nigel took a running start and threw his whole body against the door. The lock creaked, and on the second try it immediately slammed open, revealing a dark and dusty closet and two figure writhing on top of each other.

His first reaction was to avert his gaze, but Nigel was just so sick with worry that he took a stepped in to take a better look. He found a teenager, almost as man, thrusting into someone significantly smaller than him. The boy he recognized as Matthew paused and looked back, not at all bothered by the intrusion.

“Can you kindly fuck off?” Matthew muttered with lazy arrogance, eyes half lidded with pleasure. “My boyfriend and I are rather busy here.”

When he caught sight of Will’s distinctive curls Nigel blood immediately went cold. “Get the fuck off him.” Nigel said, hauling Matthew off and slamming him against a metal rack. A smattering of stationeries and books rained upon Matthew’s half naked body before he fell onto the ground, dazed by the power he haven’t experienced before.

Nigel immediately knelt down beside Will, pulling off his leather jacket to cover the boy’s prone body. “No, no, no.” He muttered when he caught sight of the blood and semen dripping from between his legs. Will’s previously bright eyes now stared blankly up at him, his cheeks pale with drying tear tracks.

“Darling, it’s me.” Nigel whispered, afraid that the weight of his voice would be enough to shatter him into pieces, but the boy didn’t answer. He just turned and looked past him, his eyes wide and blank, bearing little of his life and vitality left.

As Nigel beheld the result of his stupidity, he cursed himself and accepted the full brunt of guilt and shame. This was twice now that his dependency has hurt the people that he loved, and this time it was all within his control.

If only he hadn't been such a fuck up, he could've showed up in the morning, glared at the parade of disparaging housewife in their cars, and protected his boy like he's supposed to. It's only a simple thing, brain meltingly boring at times, but it meant the world to the boy. Now that he has broken his promise and trust, and Nigel knew he deserved nothing short of death.

But first, he needed to punish the one that hurt his boy.

He gingerly placed Will back onto the floor, cushioning his head with his discarded clothes. "I'll be right be right back darling. Don't you worry, alright?" He said to try and reassure his boy, but Will's only answer was his blank stare, eyes unreadable as he struggled to pull himself out of his mire of misery.

Nigel turned around to glare at Matthew, who watched the whole scene with dispassionate eyes. "Way to ruin our first time, jackass." The boy spat, rubbing his lips as his mouth began to taste of iron. Red filled his vision once more as Nigel rushed back and shoved Matthew against the metal racks, pinning him by his neck and holding him near choking as his feet kicked off the ground.

"You hurt him." Nigel said, his voice trembling from the rage threatening to boil over. Matthew pried Nigel's finger's open and stumbled down to the ground, coughing as he rubbed his bruised trachea.

"He's fine, he's fine." The teenager croaked, rolling his eyes almost petulantly as if Nigel was but a fly buzzing in his space. "He's my boyfriend. I wouldn't want to ever hurt my baby like that, right Will?" He called out to the boy, straightening his back as he tucked his cock into his pants with a lackadaisical glee.

Out on the floor Will flinched at the sound of Matthew's voice, curling in into a smaller ball to make himself a small of a target as possible. It did not went unnoticed to Nigel's eyes, and before he could deliberate on his action his hands already moved to puck Matthew on the face, knocking him onto the floor.

“You just punched me you fucking asshole!” The boy shouted, instantly jumping up to his feet, unafraid and ready to trade blows with his rival. Before he could even throw his first punch Nigel knocked him to the ground once more, jumping onto his body and all but mauling him with his fist.

The man all but poured all of his anger and frustration into Matthew’s face, unleashing his shame and hatred and sharp feeling of inadequacy. His hands shake throughout it all. He didn’t know if it’s from the coke, heroin withdrawal, or the sheer bestial wrath awakened by this tragedy.

It didn’t matter. He’s only good for fucking things up, and he will fuck Matthew up with the greatest pleasure.

“I’m going to kill you. I’m going to fucking kill you.” He muttered, not even letting up to give Matthew any space to breathe. The chaos that ran through is blood charged every muscle, a catalyst for all the terrible things that had happened to him, and Nigel leaned into it, lost it’s seductive hum.

Still high of the sick pleasure of revenge and rush of cocaine, Nigel didn’t recognize the small arms that suddenly wrapped around his body. He shoved them all aside, his mind hell bent on destroying Matthew completely, but an anguished cry caught his attention and made his stomach drop.

Will laid clutching his arm on the floor, his whole body curled and obscured by the swatch of leather Nigel placed around him. He immediately rushed over to Will, leaving the bleeding teenager on the floor.

“Oh fuck. Goddamit. Darling, *please* darling. I’m sorry. FUCK!” Nigel whispered, cradling his head and realized in horror that Will had knocked his head on the sharp metal rack and cut his forehead.

Will was still conscious, though his vision is blurry from the tears on his face. “Nigel.” He whispered as his eyes cleared enough to make out the man’s features. “You’re late.” He said, though he couldn’t stop the smile from reaching his eyes even through the pain. For as terrible as that experience with Matthew was, Nigel was now with him, and Will had no doubt that everything will be okay.

“I know, I fucked up big time. I’m just... so fucking sorry Will.” Nigel whispered, pulling the boy and frantically rubbing the arm that he accidentally injured. It would’ve been so much easier if the boy was angry with him, but Will looked at him with those same hopeful eyes that made him feel like a hero, and Nigel deserved none of that.

Though he may have failed his one and only job, Nigel can make sure that the despicable man wouldn’t hurt Will ever again. “Don’t worry, darling. I can fix this.” He said almost frantically. “I’ll kill him for you. That way he could never put his hands on you again, alright?”

Alarmed by Nigel’s sudden murderous intention, Will reached out to grab his arm and pulled him back. The man instantly stilled, his eyes looking down sadly at Will’s weak fingers struggling to hold him still, his neat nails and soft hands edged with Matthew’s blood.

“Please don’t. The police is going to arrest you if you do.” Will said, his words warbling into bull blown sobs, not because of the pain he’s in, but because of the terrifying idea of his knight and protector disappearing forever. He already experienced the hell of Nigel’s absence, he couldn’t possibly survive his school without him.

“Fucking let them!” Nigel shouted, half blinded by his own rage and guilt. *‘Then they can put me where I belong.’*

Though he may not be the strongest boy physically, Will has always been a resilient boy. Though his rape did not break him, Nigel’s words made him bawl out in tears. Will sobbed, clenching Nigel’s shirt while begging for him not to leave him. He can’t, for who will be in his corner if Nigel was suddenly gone.

As he held the crying boy in his arms Nigel was once again reminded at how painfully young Will was. He puts on a brave face and tries his best to do well everyday, but he’s far too young to withstand any of this. Nigel didn’t need to add to his pain, but he also knew that men like him were better off in prison or dead.

“I don’t want you to go to jail.” Will hiccupped between his tears. “Who’s going to walk with me to school then?” He said, his voice turning desperately demanding as clutched onto Nigel with desperate hands, his whole body completely trembling in fear at the thought of losing him.

Nigel pulled him close, unable comprehend Will's need for him. How could the boy reach out to him and not be in fear? How could he depend on him, look at him with such hope after he let him down so completely? People left him when he disappointed them, threw him out of their lives before he could hurt them further, but Will remained, reaching for him even when he's naked and cold.

What else could Nigel do but hold on and do as he's asked?

"Alright. Whatever you want darling." The man whispered with hopeful resignation. He pulled the boy into his arms and shielded him away from Matthew's bleeding form.

He brought the boy his clothes, helped him stepped gingerly into his pants, and bundled him up in his jacket. Nigel considered throwing away the blood-stained shirt, but he went back and tucked it under his belt.

Though it pains him to see the evidence of Will's violation, Nigel will keep it somewhere in his home. It will serve as a daily reminder of his duty, and of the time he put his selfish desire over Will's safety.

With the boy curled into the crook of his arms, Nigel walked out of the classroom with only Dragon's bluff as his destination. He caught sight of the boy's things still strewn in front of the staircase, so he came close and sat Will on one of the steps, making quick work of gathering all of his scattered books and papers.

The boy was no longer crying, much to Nigel's relief, but his eyes were still distant and unseeing, though they were forever trained onto Nigel's kneeling form, hoping to tie him down with his gaze alone. After depositing everything to the boy's lap, Nigel leaned in and placed a kiss onto his forehead, brushing down Will's mussed up hair with great tenderness.

"Put all your stuff into your bag, okay? I'll be back soon." Nigel said, placing one more kiss to reassure the boy. Will opened his lips to protest, but he was just so tired. So he bit his chapped lips and nodded, willing his hands to move away from its death grip on Nigel's sleeve.

With one last smile and kiss, Nigel left the boy to his simple task, something to take his mind off the violation he just endured. Nigel then stalked over to the supply closet, his expression

growing grave and dark with every step.

He found Matthew doubled over on the floor, coughing out a mixture of spit and blood. The older boy didn't notice Nigel's approach, nor did he anticipate the man's large hand slamming his head back down against the hard floor, but when his teeth clattered against concrete, he knew that Nigel wasn't done with him.

"Leave town." Nigel said, his voice low and dangerous. "Drop out of school. Run away from home for all I care, but if I ever see your face in this fucking school again, I will nail you to a fucking cross in the middle of the goddamn dessert and leave you to the vultures. Understand that you little cunt?"

For a moment it looked like Matthew was all but ready to rear back up for another fight, but when he tried to push himself up, he found that he could barely move an inch. Nigel pulled the boy's head back and slammed it once more against the ground. "Got. That. Cunt?" He asked once more.

Knowing that he's been beaten, Matthew managed a strangled "... Yes." Before Nigel finally released him. Satisfied at the pathetic answer, Nigel stood up and slammed the door shut.

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3

# Apologies

## Chapter Summary

After bringing Will home, Nigel takes care of him and tried to make amends

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I want to go home.”

“I know kiddo. I know.”

“This isn’t the way home.”

“Shh... don’t you worry about that darling. Just sleep.”

“Nigel.” Will’s small hands gripped hard, blunted nails sinking into the flesh of Nigel’s neck in terror. “Where are you taking me?” He asked, eyes darting wild to make out where he was.

The man hesitated, not wanting to further upset the boy after something so traumatic, but Nigel has never been much of a liar, and honor dictated that he to come clean to the person he just sorely betrayed.

“To the hospital.” He finally relented, trying his best to gentle the boy when his words made him jerk in surprise. “You’re going to get your injuries checked out. From then, they’ll call the police to take some statements and-”

“No!” Will shouted, pushing himself away from Nigel’s arms only to crumple to the ground, his legs too weak to hold themselves up. “I don’t want to. I just want to go home!”

Nigel bit down a curse and willed his voice to gentleness. “You’re hurt Will.” Nigel said, frustrated at the boy’s refusal. “A doctor need to check you out, and the police to hear what happen so they can expel that piece of shit Matthew Brown.” He patiently explained, sighing at Will’s stony expression. “Just look at you darling, you can’t even stand up by yourself.”

“I can! I-“ Will insisted, pushing himself up only to stumble back to his knees. He looked up to Nigel, eyes blank but brows furrowed down with determination. “I can do it.” He said between gritted teeth, trying to push though the aches and pain and falling against Nigel’s body.

Images of his father’s disapproval entered his mind, how his lips would curl in disgust at the mention of yet another of his son’s weakness. Though he knew that his fault was many, Will still wanted to make the man proud. Right now, just the thought of his disappointment was more than what Will could bear.

With his fist clenched and body trembling with adrenaline, Will forced himself to stand up even as his knees continued to buckle.

“I can do it. I can walk, so please, don’t take me there.” He said, every new word disintegrating into thin pleas muffled into Nigel’s body. “I don’t want anyone to know...”

Every weak vibration against his skin sent jagged spikes straight into Nigel’s heart, rending it anew with pain he was ignorant of until today. Did loving someone hurt this much? He didn’t remember a time where he ached for Gabi’s pain like he ached for Will’s. With her, Nigel only remembered the arguments and the violent lovemaking. There was no blinding empathy for each other’s suffering like this.

Just seeing Will struggle made Nigel’s heart ache, but at the same time he couldn’t stop the pride welling up in his chest as he witnessed the boy’s effort. Nigel knew about that bone deep exhaustion, how it sapped the last stores of your energy and leave the body empty. The willingness to push through pain and fatigue was what made fighters like him stands out, and after what just transpired, there was no doubt in his mind that his boy was a fighter through and through.

Unable to bear witness to Will’s struggle any longer, Nigel pulled him up into his arms and rested the boy’s head on his shoulder, holding him firm to stop him from bucking his way onto

the ground. "Alright darling. I'll take you home." He said, bowing to the boy's wishes with newfound respect.

Within a second Will's body went from rigid to lax, melting against Nigel's acceptance and understanding "Thank you." He said, uttering his gratitude between tearful sobs that never seemed to cease. Nigel remained silent, not acknowledging any of his words because he deserved none of it.

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They arrived in the gate long past dusk, the air cold enough bite any lingering wildlife to their den. The same goes with the guards, who huddled inside their station over thermos of coffee, unwilling to step outside unless duty demanded them to. The only exception to the rule was Winston, whose eyes trained suspiciously at Nigel's approaching form, glaring at the suspicious mound in his arms.

"Open the gate." Nigel said, his voice edged with something dangerous. When the man looked pointedly at Will's sleeping form, Nigel immediately softened and brushed his hair to cover the wound on his forehead.

"He's had a long day." He explained, vying for the man's sympathy. Winston stood steadfast in his place, unconvinced that Nigel was one to be trusted.

"I can carry him inside." The guard said, reaching out to relieve Nigel of his burden. Will was the reason why Winston stayed late anyways, the man sensing his distress early on in the morning. "I've walked Will inside before. Let me-"

"Don't touch him." Nigel hissed with the ferocity of a wild animal. Winston winced, reaching back towards his walkie talkie to inform the other guards of a possible altercation. Something was off. Young master Graham was clearly injured, and Winston suspect it had something to do with Nigel's absence.

Just as he was going to bring the device up to his lips, the sleepy bundle shifted, fussing his small face against Nigel's neck. "Nigel." Will's barely audible voice called out, his dirty hands reaching up to cradle himself closer to his bodyguard.

"Shh... We're almost there sweet boy." Nigel said, quietly soothing Will back to sleep. Winston immediately stood down, hesitant to disturb the boy's rest. Will clearly needed it, and if he trusted Nigel enough to keep him safe, then Winston should do well to respect his wishes.

With a heavy sigh the guard finally stepped aside to allow passage for the man.

"Go on then." He jerked his head after opening the side gate. "The housekeeper already gone home for the night, so you'll need to unlock the door yourself."

When Nigel gave him a blank stare, Winston grumbled and pointed off past the hill at the end of the block. "Graham House is just past that bend there. You'll recognize it. It's the biggest house around the block with a lake just beyond the property."

Nigel though he already witnessed the extent of the area's extravagance, but Winston's description made Nigel pause. He gave a short nod to thank the man and began making his way to their destination, keeping to the empty sidewalks that bordered each manicured lawn.

During his journey he passed a few patrolling guards, some who recognized him and called out in greeting, and who didn't and gave made sure they were known. A few moved to stop him, all eager to escort him out of the place, but the second they noticed Will's sleeping form, they backed away, tipped their hats in respect, and allowed Nigel to go on his way.

It seemed like even amongst the rich the Graham name held a considerable amount of influence. It's either that or these security guards were too chicken shit to bother a little boy.

When he stepped just beyond the hill of the large mansion, Nigel stopped in his tracks and just stood there. He blinked once, rubbed his eyes twice, but even then he remained dumfounded at the magnitude of Graham House.

Big doesn't seem to describe the sheer mass of land that one estate can claim. The house itself was gargantuan, encompassing almost two blocks of uninterrupted greenery with a small forest acting as a natural border from its neighbor.

Just as Winston said, there was a lake just beyond the edge of the property, bending behind a thick blanket of trees and disappearing from sight. It's almost laughable that they're able to build such estate. The place was a big middle finger to any homeowner association, a statement from someone with enough money to piss off folks who can afford to file lawsuits for pleasure.

Though immense in size, there was no security measures like gates and cameras around the house. That in itself was a testament to the trust placed on Winston and his compatriot. It's either that or Will's father was arrogant enough to believe that no one would ever rob him.

"We're here darling." Nigel breathed, his throat feeling tight when he realized that he's holding onto the heir of an obscene fortune. In his arms Will remained unchanged, the same sweet boy who deemed him worthy enough to touch.

"Your keys, gorgeous." Nigel gently prompted, unable to stop the endearments flowing out of his lips. Will gave him a strange look before rummaging through his pockets, one that's too keen and distrustful for someone his age.

"You don't have to do that you know." Will muttered, wiping his face from the traces of sleep. Nigel gave him a questioning look as they walked up to the front door. "You know, the darlings and... gorgeous and stuff." The boy sighed and slid himself down from Nigel's arms, holding himself up against the door as he struggled with the keys. "I know you're just saying those things to make me feel better."

"So what if I am?" Nigel said, coming close behind the boy to take the keys from his hand. He unlocked the door with little difficulty and pulled the boy up into his arms. "You've just been through a hard thing. Let me take care of you."

"But I can--"

"Darling." Nigel rumbled, his voice taking on a sharper edge before crumbling back to its usual gentleness. "Let me take care of you."

There was guilt in Nigel's eyes when he said those words, one that made him look as sad as the first time Will found him. The boy forgot how wretched the man looked back then, for their days has been filled with nothing but smiles and kind companionship. It made it easy to forget just how miserable they were before, and it hurts him to know that one unfortunate event could bring them back to that state.

Even in his weakened state Will wanted nothing more than to make it all go away, so he fought down on his need to lash out and leaned deep into Nigel's arms, seeking the warmth and comfort that never failed to calm his emotions. "Okay." He said, trust coming easily to them both.

Sometimes accepting other's help was the best way of helping them through their struggle. Will knew that he was the victim, but that doesn't mean that he's the only one that's hurting.

They stepped into the darkened foyer, and immediately Nigel felt like he was in a mausoleum. The interior of the house was shadowed and stiff, all dark wood and sharp angles of an upscale hunting lodge. Nigel could smell the faint traces of cigar smoke clinging to the fur of the various animal's head hunted along the long hallways, their tusk and horns gleaming menacingly even in death.

Despite its opulent furnishings, the place doesn't feel like a home at all, and secretly Nigel pitied the boy for living in such a cold place, wandering alone from hall to hall, always looking for a way to win his father's approval.

"My room's upstairs." Will mumbled, nodding to the grand staircase that loomed just beyond the hall. Nigel nodded, obeying the boy's whispered directions until they arrive in front of the room.

"Pardon the intrusion." Nigel muttered, feeling slightly sheepish for stepping into the boy's sanctum.

Will smiled, pleased by the man's courtesy. After the terrible thing Matthew just did, the small measure of politeness pleased the southern raised boy. Civilized conduct was the perfect antidote to uncivilized behavior, and as superfluous as 'please's and 'thank you's are, it made Will feel better all the same.

Compared the rest of the house, Will's room looked painfully minimalistic. It had a much warmer atmosphere, with books on the walls instead of taxidermies and burnt orange wallpapers instead of sharp flourishes made of tusks. On the corner of the room was a well-worn study table, made of heavy wood with equally heavy books piled on top.

Nigel could imagine the boy slaving over it every night, a studious boy who dared to dream of a peaceful life. It filled Nigel with a new sort of grief, because that version of his boy has died, killed by the greed and cruelty of others.

The whole reason Nigel took this job was because he wanted to preserve the boy's peace. He wanted to keep the boy safe so that his worries were limited things like tests and awkward school dances. Now, Will was shivering in his arms, and Nigel knew that it was all because he dropped the ball.

Still filled with mounting regret, Nigel placed Will on the neatly made mattress, the bed so large that it only accentuated just how small the boy was. Though the comforter were as soft as feather, Will still winced when Nigel settled him in, the wound from his violation sending a throbbing pain that flared up his spine.

"You okay?" The man immediately asked in alarm. Will gave him a weak smile and nodded, immediately pulling his legs under the jacket. Everything felt cold without the warmth of Nigel's body, and it reminded him too much of the cold floor where he was held down by Matthew's talons.

The sensation didn't last long, for Nigel immediately knelt down and place a large hand over his cheeks, his palm warm and reassuring that it almost made Will whimper out in relief.

"Yeah, I'm okay." The boy sighed, leaning heavily against the only person he trusted.

Nigel smiled fondly, gently turning Will's his face back and forth to inspect the bleeding cut near his hairline. If they're lucky then the boy might not need any stitches, but Nigel knew just how bad simple head wound could get when left untreated.

"Do you have a first aid kit anywhere?" He asked as he thumbed over the bite marks and scars marring Will's soft skin. He would erase them if he could, but there's a much more dangerous

desire brewing under his skin, one that belonged to a territorial beast who would make do with putting his own mark on the boy.

He promptly pushed those thoughts aside, disgusted that he could even considered such a thing.

“Downstairs. Phyllis usually keeps one in the pantry.” Will belatedly added. It was just so nice to zone out. That’s all he wanted to do, not to feel or think, just quietly existing in the sphere of Nigel’s warmth.

“Alright. Hang tight for a bit, okay? Try and get yourself out of those clothes. We’ll need to get rid of it before your maid sees it. The blood and cum-“

Will visibly flinched at the mention of those two things, cheeks turning red before draining of color completely. Nigel quietly berated himself for being so insensitive. “Sorry.” He muttered, turning away to leave lest he uttered something idiotic once more.

Small hands grasped the edges of his sleeve and pulled Nigel back, catching him off guard as the boy leapt up to wrap his whole body against Nigel’s side. “Don’t leave me.” Will pleaded, genuinely terrified at the prospect of the man absence. Only Nigel can give him safety, and if he’s gone, how can Will be sure that he’s going to come back?

“It’s only for a while.” Nigel reasoned, unable to stop himself from smiling from the boy’s neediness. It felt nice to be needed. It’s an affirmation of his purpose, a dispelling of his fears of disownment. He was still worthy, even with his faults and mistakes.

As pleasant as it all way, there was still work that needs to be done. Nigel gently led the boy back to the bed, pushing the hair from his face to meet Will’s uncertain eyes.

“I promise I’ll be back soon.” The man insisted, but Will quickly broke the gaze, unable to hold his eyes for more than a second.

Nigel sighed, forcing himself to smile, but even he could only hold it up until he’s out of Will’s sight. It was all a farce, because nothing in Will’s world would ever be the same, and it’s idiotic to pretend otherwise.

Nigel floated through the halls like a ghost, ignorant of the extravagance that would otherwise made him stutter in his steps. His own body ached, both from the aftermath of his fight and from his demanding habit.

It's disconcerting really, because usually Nigel was able to overcome his need through sheer willpower alone. Today, neither his flesh nor his heart was willing, for his mind was slowly crumbling under the weight of his own guilt.

He found the first aid box easily enough, but instead of immediately going back to Will's side, Nigel hunched himself over the kitchen counter, cutting the last of his cocaine reserves into neat lines. There was no need for any straw or rolled up bills. Nigel was desperate enough to chase each line with his face flat against the marble.

His deaden nerves no longer stung from snorting coke, but the brackish chemical taste still lingered after every hit. He spat out into the polished sink, the wet glop hitting his own dull reflection right on the face.

He looked warped and distorted there, as if it showed the reality of his own twisted heart.

"What the fuck am I doing?" He asked out loud, wiping his own face tiredly. When the silence of the house grew too cold, Nigel slunk off with the first aid kit in tow, bearing the weight of his own judgment as he made his way back to his boy.

After a few of his knocks went unanswered, Nigel gave up on propriety and altogether. "Will?" He called out, pushing in to find the bedroom empty. Off to the side, the bathroom door was ajar, showing a sliver of Will's noticeable curls peeking from the corner.

"There you are." The man said in relief as he made his way inside the en suite. "I was worried that you were gone. I won't even know where to start looking if you run off on me."

The boy said nothing, acknowledging neither Nigel's presence nor his words. He just stared at his naked reflection with a harrowed look on his face, eyes darting from one livid mark to the other.

Like one might approach a skittish animal, Nigel gently put a hand over the boy's frail shoulder, jolting him out of his daze. "Shower?" He asked while averting his eyes.

Will blinked, unashamed of his own nakedness. Why should he even try to cover himself? Nigel has seen everything already, from the long-faded tears to the tears in his most secret place. There's nothing else he could do that would be worse than what had already happened.

Though emotions did not seem to touch the boy, Nigel was devastated at the state of his body. The old fading bruises Francis gave Will now seemed benign in comparison to those. Nigel could understand childish cruelty, but this?

There's no excusing the savage suck marks littering Will's body, no explaining the evil behind each bite. They just exist, and long after they've healed they would continue to exist. Like a mountain cleaved after an earthquake, Nigel didn't know how to put his boy back together.

Still, it doesn't mean that he will ever stop trying.

"Slowly darling, don't slip." He said, taking great care to lead the boy under the warm spray of water. The boy barely blinked, standing as still as a statue under the running water.

Realizing that the boy was in no condition to take care of himself, Nigel pulled off his shirt and stepped in after him, taking a wide berth away from Will so he won't crowd the small boy.

"It'll only be a second." Nigel insisted, grabbing a soapy washcloth and working it up to a lather. It felt invasive to touch the boy directly, but Nigel didn't want Will to wake up still stinking of Matthew. The boy has gone through enough. He didn't need to be greeted by the stench of his rapist first thing in the morning.

"All done." Nigel said, struggling to keep his voice short of somber and gruff. He held out a towel for Will while he himself was still dripping water into the tub, but after taking one step the boy immediately winced and stilled.

“It hurts to move.” Will whispered, tiny hands clenched beside himself when it dawned on him just *where* the pain was radiating from.

“Say no more.” Nigel said, stepping into the puddle to swaddle Will in the fluffy towel. With him pressed against Nigel’s body, the boy didn’t seem so unstable. His breathing slowly evened out and his body grew pliant and soft. “Just a bit longer kiddo. I’ll let you sleep after I put these bandages on you.”

“Do we have to?” Will grumbled, burying deeper into the folds.

“I’m afraid we do.” The man said, indulging the boy’s uncharacteristic petulance.

He quickly worked on disinfecting his wounds, pouring peroxide over bite marks and rubbing ointment onto bruises. Each blemish on Will’s skin made Nigel wish he had killed Matthew instead, but he will settle for his boy’s safety over the satisfaction of revenge.

Unable to bear the sight of Matthew’s conquest, Nigel made quick work of his ministration and moved to dress him. Though he tried his best to be gentle, the wound on Will’s forehead bled anew, dripping onto the tip of his nose and threatening to stain his clothes.

“I’ll need to stitch it close.” Nigel muttered, rummaging inside the first aid kit for a set of sterile sutures.

“Better than the hospital, right?” Will said with a smile and laugh that sounded hollow and fake.

Though it’s hard to ignore something so heartbreaking, Nigel forced himself to stay quiet. He won’t argue with the boy, not after he disappointed him that badly. Instead he motioned for the boy to sit on the ground, giving him a pillow to hug while he struggled to thread the needle. The boy sat patiently, laying his head on Nigel’s lap like a docile kitten.

“Ready?” Nigel asked, more for himself than for the placid boy. Will hummed and closed his eyes, his calm demeanor juxtaposing against Nigel’s jittery nerves. Moments like these made it clear that despite their age, Will was by far the braver of them two. Nigel just wished that the boy didn’t *need* to be brave. He deserved the blind comfort that most child has.

As metal sunk into flesh, Will gave the barest of a twitch and drew in a sharp hiss of breath. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Nigel babbled, feeling terrible hurting the boy. "I know it fucking sucks." He wished he could have something to lessen the pain, and in a moment of panic Nigel even considered giving the boy a small bump of cocaine.

Before he could go through with his manic train of thoughts, Will's small hand reached up to held onto Nigel's, dispelling his growing tremors and desperate plans. "I'm okay." He insisted, doling out his forgiveness with the sweetest little whisper.

Nigel nodded and returned to work, focusing on making neat little rows to avoid scarring the boy further. Will gritted his teeth, a trooper to the end, but each drag of thread stings and made his eye water. He abandoned his pillow altogether and held onto Nigel's leg instead, counting the man's hammering heartbeat to distract himself from the pain.

"There." Nigel sighed, snipping the ends of the thread and instantly pulling the boy close. "Fucking done." He said, rubbing the boy's back to assuage his guilt. It was unnecessary, but Will accepted his hushed apologies anyways.

It feels nice to be treated so kindly, even if he had to go through something so horrible. It's what the boy always craved, a genuine connection that doesn't fill his head with duplicitous motive or jarring apathy.

Yet as time passed Nigel's words began to grow fervent, his apologies slurring into self-hatred and disturbing promise of retribution. "I'll make him pay. You'll see. Nobody touches you like that. I'll find that fucker and rip his head in two."

"Nigel." Will spoke up, shocked by the sharp emotions that tainted the man's good intentions. He pulled away to chastise the man, but he found himself mute as he beheld the traces of tears clinging to Nigel's red rimmed eyes.

"Stop." He pleaded weakly, still shaken at the sight of an adult moved to tears. "Nigel, I'm okay. See?" Will insisted, holding his hands out to show Nigel's handywork. The man immediately pulled him close, muffling the pained scream that threatened to climb out of his throat.

“No you’re not.” Nigel choked, hating himself for unravelling in front of his boy. “I’m supposed to protect you, take care of you. That’s my one goddamn job and I-“

“But you did take care of me. You’re doing in right now.“

“The hell I am.” Nigel laughed, his voice as thin as fragile as spun sugar. “Fuck. Can’t even keep myself together for you.”

Though the statement might be accurate, Nigel’s scorn confused the boy. Can he not see just how good he was for him? Will shudder at the things that might happen without him.

“You know that I forgive you, right?” Will asked, hoping that it might assuage Nigel’s guilt. “You didn’t hurt me. Matthew did.” He said, but the man’s anger was slowly bleeding into his, and Will found his words growing short and terse, when all he wanted to do was repay Nigel with the same kindness he showed him.

No matter how hard he tried, his words fell on deaf ears. Nothing could convince the man to stop. He just keep talking, guilty confession turning into self-flagellation, and it just made Will see red.

“If I just did my job-“ Nigel continued, blind to his own rage infecting his boy.

“Well you didn’t!” Will shouted as he succumbed to Nigel’s rage. “You didn’t show up and Matthew raped me. It is your fault. There! Are you happy now?”

As soon as those words left his lips, Will immediately wish he could take them back. “I... I didn’t mean them.” He stammered, horrified that he would repay Nigel’s kindness with such cruel words.

Instead of leaving him like Will feared he might, the man let out a deep breath and pulled the boy into a tight embrace. “Thank you.” He said, Will’s rage a bitter balm that finally quietened his vociferous mind. “I needed to hear that from you.”

“That... doesn’t make any sense.” Will replied, accepting the man’s embrace and praying that it might be the last form of penance he might endure. After the day’s ordeal, such outburst exhausted the last of Will’s reserve, leaving him winded and drained. The warmth of Nigel’s arms blanketed his mind into stillness, and when he closed his eyes to blink, Will found himself slipping into slumber.

“I’m...” Nigel stopped himself from uttering one more ‘sorry’. There was no one to hear it, and even if Will was awake for it, his forgiveness was too heavy for the man to bear. So he tucked the boy underneath his blanket and brushed his hair, making space for one last kiss as he a promise worth more than a thousand apologies.

“I’ll do better.” He said, kneeling by his bed and clasping his hands together. “I’ll be better for you.”

## Chapter End Notes

A/N: Thank you for reading! Your comments and kudos are very much appreciated <3

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